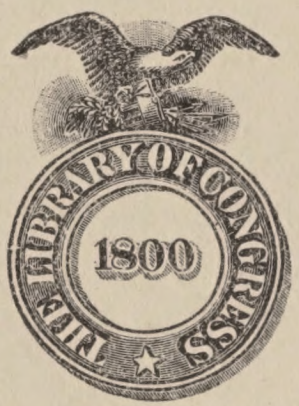
TRUDY *and* TIMOTHY FORESTERS

BERTHA CURRIER PORTER



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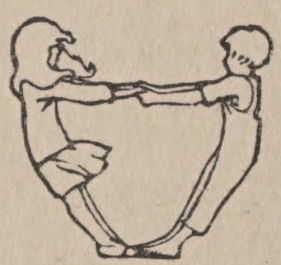
MR. THISSELL FOUND FAULT WITH
GRANDMOTHER'S COOKING

Trudy and Timothy Foresters

By BERTHA CURRIER PORTER

Author of "Trudy and Timothy"
"Trudy and Timothy Out-of-Doors"
"Trudy and Timothy and the Trees"



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Trudy and Timothy, Foresters

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Introduction

DEAR BOYS AND GIRLS:

Those of you who have read "Trudy and Timothy" and "Trudy and Timothy, Out of Doors" must know by this time how Todd's Ferry looks, and you must feel as though you know everyone in the village.

You may remember that in "Trudy and Timothy and the Trees" the children went to Washington and learned many wonderful things about their country and its government and how to combat the lumber companies which were menacing the wonderful old trees about Todd's Ferry. Forest rangers taught them how to know the danger and made them realize how terrible it would be for their little town if all the beautiful forest were laid waste.

In this story Trudy and Timothy prove that they can help the forest ranger; that they can help an embittered old man realize that there are

good things in life and that he will be happier by helping others. You will learn who Carmencita is, how the boys built a shack in the woods and how Trudy and Timothy and their little friends helped save the woods about Todd's Ferry from fire.

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Trudy and Timothy, Foresters

CHAPTER I

PLAY-TIME

"TIMOTHY! Timothy! — Oh, Mrs. Todd, where is Timothy?"

Trudy, Claire and Isabelle, followed by Francis, dashed into Grandmother's kitchen. She was washing the breakfast dishes, while Dilly, the cat, lapped her milk from the saucer under the wooden sink. Dilly flew out the door, but Grandmother, who was used to children, only looked over her spectacles and said, "Timothy?— I think he went out to the barn."

"Here I am," said Timothy himself, coming in from the shed. "Gee, I'm glad you came over."

"You'll be gladder when you hear the news," cried Trudy. "What do you think? Claire and Isabelle are going to stay!"

"With Trudy, and her mother and father."

"All summer, except when we have to go down to the North Shore for the picture, and then Mr. Sims is coming up after us in the car, and bring us right back again."

"And we're going to have some company at the big house, too," said Francis. "We just got a cable that Father and Mother are on the way home."

"Oh, Francis, I'm so glad," said Grandmother. "They haven't seen you since you could walk. I think that's just as nice as it can be."

"Well," said Timothy, "come on out to the barn. I've got to do my chores, but we can talk, and plan what we'll do first. I've been up in the shed attic this morning, fixing a thing to make fire without matches, but it won't work yet. As soon as Grandfather can spare me, we'll go down to Aunt Theresy's and get Abbott to show me what's the matter."

"Wait a minute," interrupted Grandfather, who had come in while they were all talking at once; "let me get this thing straight. Do I understand that Claire and Isabelle are going to

have a vacation, and are planning to spend it here?"

"Yes."

"Then I think Timothy would better take one too, don't you, Mother? He's been working pretty hard this summer, earning money to buy timber, and has shown a fairly good business head. He needs a rest."

Timothy's eyes grew round. Grandmother wiped the dishes, saying, "There, Father, don't tease them. Say your say, and be done with it."

"All right. Timothy, I shan't need you any more this season. I've hired Ben Dobson to help me with the work, and I want you to play just as hard as ever you can with all your friends."

Then maybe there wasn't a jubilation. Timothy flew out the door and turned handsprings all over the door-yard, with Claire close behind. Isabelle hugged Trudy, and Francis ran toward the telephone. "Let's get Belle," he cried, "and have a picnic right now."

Grandfather came to the door.

"Stop a minute," he called. "There is one little piece of work I'd like to have both Trudy

and Timothy do. I've talked about it with Trudy's father and mother, and they agree. Perhaps you'd all be interested—just a little bit of work——"

The children looked doubtful. "Study?" This was vacation, and school did not begin until the end of September.

"It isn't books," Grandfather went on. "It is only to learn all you can from Abbott Kimball while he is here working for the Government. You know he is going to do some looking over this locality for the Senator while he is here, and it will take him out around a good deal, probably up the mountain, and over toward Prattville. Sometimes he might be gone several days, and maybe camp a bit. I thought you could help him. Of course, if you don't want to, why, just say so."

Grandfather had to shut the door quick, and hold it against them all. They hooted at him, and said, "You wait! Why, we thought you meant studying. This will be fun! May we really go with him and sleep out-of-doors all night?"

"Go and ask him," called Grandfather. "Go over to Theresy's now and make your plans. The rest of the summer is yours."

"Run along," said Francis. "I'll catch you just as soon as I get Belle and ask her to come too."

"Tell her to meet us at The Boulder," shouted Timothy.

All this happened on the morning after the wonderful celebration of Old Home Week had closed with the presentation of Aunt Theresy Hinton's big pines to the town of Todd's Ferry. All summer, ever since the children had found out the cause of Aunt Theresy's sickness to be the fear of having to sell the great trees that had belonged to her ancestors for so many years, they had been working to earn money to buy them from her, and save them from the lumberman. And now, because Mr. Perkins had happened to overhear their plans, everything had been straightened out in the most marvelous manner. The pines were saved, and beneath them stood a granite marker, from the quarry on Mr. Johnston's hill, telling all about it. This was The

Boulder, and the children had not seen it since the night before. And now there was to be no more work for—why, there were two more weeks, almost, in August, and all of September nearly, before school opened, and if anything should happen, school might be later still. Sometimes it was. And nothing to do but stay out-of-doors and play!

They scampered down the path, by the sap-house where the "We Four—No More" had held their meetings, and where the "We Four—Lots More" had been organized on that never-to-be-forgotten day when Mr. Perkins made up his mind.

Suddenly Timothy stopped.

"Say," he shouted, "what are we thinking of? We haven't elected Claire and Isabelle to the Club yet. All those in favor of having Claire and Isabelle for members of the 'We Four—Lots More' manifest it by saying 'Aye'—those opposed, 'No'—it is a vote. There, now you're members."

"But they haven't any rings."

"Oh, never mind that," replied Isabelle; "you

can teach us the signs and the passwords, and we'll have just as good a time."

"My Santa Claus man will have some more rings made. I'm sure he will," promised Trudy.

They stopped at the spring for a drink, then hurried on to Aunt Theresy's house. Stanley Blake and Abbott Kimball were boarding there; and as the children came up the path, they heard pounding in the barn.

"I'll bet Stanley is making a new dark room," said Timothy; "he's going to take some more nature pictures. He wants to get some skunks. Skunks won't hurt you if you don't scare them. I'm going to take some skunk pictures with my camera, too."

But when they reached the barn, it was not Stanley or Abbott, but Amos, and he was putting up a partition next to the stalls.

"Look," whispered Trudy to Francis. "Oh, Francis, there's Aunt Theresy's cow back again. Isn't it lovely that Aunt Theresy won't be poor any more?"

"Good-morning, friends," said Amos, wiping

his forehead. "This is a hot day—for carpentering or for running—what's the news?"

Such a chattering! In a moment Amos covered his ears. "Wait," he begged. "One at a time, please! And suppose we have Theresy out here, so you won't have to do it all over again."

Aunt Theresy came out from the kitchen, and she and Amos heard all the news.

"Well," said Amos, taking up his hammer, "Theresy, I suppose Todd's Ferry is in for a thorough overhauling. When these youngsters get through with the stunts they are planning with Abbott, they'll know every stick and stone and tree; they'll be just as much at home sleeping on a ledge as on a feather bed; and if anyone gets lost in the wilds, they'll turn Forest Rangers and track him by the twigs he snapped when he rushed through the jungle."

"Well, you needn't make fun of it," snapped Timothy. "I'm going to find Abbott now. Where is he? And what are you making a new stall for? Is Aunt Theresy going to have a horse?"

"This isn't a stall. This is a room to store bad tempers in. Want to get rid of yours?"

Aunt Theresy laughed.

"I'm going to have another boarder," she said, "and Amos is getting her room ready. Hurry up, Amos, you know she is coming on the noon train."

"I'll bet it is a dog," Claire guessed. "A watch-dog. I love dogs."

"Is she coming up on the stage?"

There was a chuckle from the barn door. Belle stood there. "I should say not," she cried. "Pa wouldn't carry a passenger like that—not for any money. She's going to walk."

"Abbott has gone to meet her."

"Is he going to walk up with her?" demanded Timothy. "I'm going down to meet them."

Amos shouted.

"He doesn't intend to walk up with her," he gasped, as soon as he could speak from laughter. "But perhaps he will have to. She's a dark-eyed, Mexican beauty, by the name of Carmencita, and she's used to having her own way. She

has big brown eyes, and a marvelous voice, and small feet ——"

"Four of them," explained Aunt Theresy, taking pity on the puzzled children.

"I know—I know now," Timothy cried; "it's the burro! Oh, say, won't she be great when we go camping? I'm going to get Abbott to show me how to tie a pack this very afternoon. How soon will they get here? Let's go right down and meet them."

But he was persuaded to wait until after dinner. Francis reminded him that the train did not get in till half-past twelve, and Amos suggested that they all go to the schoolhouse at one o'clock, where they would be sure to see Abbott, whichever way he might come—by the road, or up the short cut past Belle's house to Aunt Theresy's.

That afternoon, Todd's Ferry saw a sight that was to become common later but was strange enough now to cause a commotion from one end of the village to the other. Up the stage road came a tiny donkey, trotting swiftly along, carrying on her back a tall young man whose legs al-

most touched the ground. Her long ears winked back and forth, and her little feet twinkled over the sandy road, while she glanced from side to side at the unfamiliar country. When a noisy group of shouting children rushed out from behind a building directly at her, she stopped with a jerk that nearly unseated her rider. She glared at the people in the road.

"Don't come near her!" shouted Abbott. "Timothy, keep away from her head—she'll nip you!—Timothy, keep away from her heels—she'll kick you!—Don't shout at her!"

"Aw," said Timothy, in disgust, "what good is she, anyway? Ugly old thing! I thought we were going to have some fun with her. I was going to learn to make a pack."

"Give her time. She is tired and strange from coming on the train. Now get out of her sight, and I'll take the short cut up to the house."

The children went back behind the schoolhouse. Carmencita looked nervously about, decided after a while that it would be safe to start again, and trotted off.

Abbott called back to them.

"Go down and meet the afternoon stage. Stanley will be on it, with the tent."

Mr. Perkins stopped the stage, and they scrambled on. Stanley was talking busily about something, but stopped with a warning look at Mr. Perkins when the children came. "Tell you the rest of it later," he said, and Mr. Perkins nodded, remarking, "Good scheme, all right. Count me in on it."

"What scheme?" asked Belle, but her father pretended not to hear.

And then Stanley took their thoughts from everything else by saying, "Abbott has had his tent sent up, and I've got some camping-kit. Fry-pan, kettle, plates and cups—we ought to have some pretty good times now. Seen Carmencita yet? To-morrow we'll try a dinner in the woods. All be at Aunt Theresy's at eight sharp."

CHAPTER II

CARMENCITA

THE sun was just showing over the mountain, and Grandfather was rolling over in bed, when from the kitchen sounded the worst clatter and bang, then the noise of tinware crashing to the floor.

"What in the world?" began Grandfather.

"Timothy, what are you up to?" called Grandmother.

Timothy's voice came up the stairway. "Oh, I dropped some wood and the milk-pails, that's all. I got up early to do my chores."

They heard the shed door slam as he ran out to the barn. When they came down-stairs, he explained.

"This is the day we're going on a picnic with the burro and Abbott. We have to start at eight o'clock, and I thought I'd go over to Aunt Theresy's early, and see if I couldn't help."

"You're not going at any such hour as this. Theresy won't be up. So sit down and eat your breakfast, and then you'll wait for the girls."

But Timothy could not wait in the house. Trudy and Francis, coming down the path from the little red house with Claire and Isabelle, met him on the way, and they cut across lots to the sap-house.

"Father is going too," said Trudy. "He had to go to the village, but he's going to leave the horse at the store, and meet us on the back road."

At the sap-house they found Amos and Belle. "Lucky it's Saturday," said Amos. "Nobody wants fish for Sunday dinner, so the fish-man can take a holiday and visit with the city folks."

Carmencita was standing by Aunt Theresy's front door, and Abbott and Stanley were lying on the grass. Timothy had expected to see a huge bundle, covered with a cloth, and bound with a network of ropes, on the burro's back; when he spied a saddle instead, he was quite disgusted.

"Where's the camp kit?" he demanded. "I

thought you said we were going to eat out in the woods, and cook our dinner the way you do out west."

"The camp kit is waiting for us at whatever spot we decide to eat, and the dinner is in our pockets, oh impatient child," laughed Abbott.

"Come on," said Stanley, "let's be going."

"Where are we going, Stanley?" asked Trudy.

"Exploring—somewhere over toward the mountain—a place you've never seen, I think."

"I bet I'll know where it is when we get there," boasted Timothy. "You can't lose me in Todd's Ferry."

But when they had passed the Primeval Pines, gone down the back road that led to the stage-road, and then suddenly struck off to the east, following an untraveled, overgrown way that was hardly more than a grassy track and apparently led nowhere in particular, winding about among pine woods, Timothy was silent. He looked sharply about for a familiar landmark, but the few deserted houses that they passed were all strange. Abbott noted the pines with a keen

eye. "White pine," he said. "Good second growth on these pastures. I tell you, those trees had room to grow. See the quantity of cones! There's going to be a big seed crop next year."

"Next year?" said Francis. "Why not this year?"

"Because white pine cones take two years to mature. Those little cones, about a couple of inches long, began to grow last June, and by next year will be from five to eleven inches long. Then they will open and shed their little winged seeds, and the wind will scatter them over the earth. See the trees on the hill there? The seeds from those cones may travel half a mile before they fall."

Carmencita did not care a bit about pine trees or cones or seeds. She trotted ahead, and they had to run to catch up with her. The road crossed a brook just beyond the pines, and dipped into a valley. Thick growths of trees shut them in now, but beyond the trees they could hear the brook murmuring among the stones. A partridge flew whirring into the underbrush. Crows, roosting in the tall trees, called to each other.

The children began to ask, "Aren't we almost there?"

Suddenly the thick woods ended. The road lay now between lovely sloping fields of rich grass-land, dotted here and there with groups of great maples and tall, graceful elms. Away below them, the brook, spreading out in the level meadow, glittered in the hot sunshine. Willow trees fringed the banks at intervals, and as the brook ran away to join the river that lay to the east, little bushes marked its course. Just over the wall, to the west, spread a great granite ledge, full of grassy hollows and shaded in many places by thick clumps of evergreens, large and small. But straight before them, beyond the open space that seemed to stretch miles and miles, dipping and rising, was the mountain!

Not one of the children had ever seen it like this. Timothy could see it from his bedroom window, but it was far away, and only showed a couple of peaks above the tree-tops. In rainy weather, the clouds hid it completely. Trudy could see a bit more, while from the big house Francis and the Johnstons could see much of its

slopes; but here, they could look up and up, from its base, rising from the valley that faced them; up its wooded sides, so huge, and yet so far away that the trees looked like little bushes; up to the bare ledges that formed its twin peaks.

For a minute no one spoke. Abbott looked from one to another, and then he laughed. "I know you like my camping-place," he said, "Ever see this spot before, Timothy?"

"No, I never did."

"Oh," breathed Trudy, still gazing at the mountain, "is that the way it looks out West?"

"Somewhat—but there's considerably more of it there. However, this is a fairly good mountain for New Hampshire. It is more imposing because it stands alone."

"Well," interrupted Timothy, "when are we going to tie the burro and camp? And when are we going to eat? And what are we going to eat? I'm hungry, but I don't see any dinner."

Father laughed, but Timothy was already at the burro's head.

"We're going over on the ledge," said Abbott. "I reckon the owner won't object to our camp-

ing on his property if we clear up when we clear out."

"Whose is it, anyway?" said Timothy. "Where are we?"

"I don't exactly know—some of the Todd's Ferry people, I suppose. They own land for miles around the village."

They followed the wall until they found a low place, and scrambled over. Carmencita was the first one across. Her four little feet clattered on the stones, and she was soon contentedly resting under a spruce tree.

Abbott set the children to work gathering dry branches.

"The girls can get the wood, while the boys dig a hole—no, we shan't need to dig, for here is a rocky hollow that is better still. Pile your small twigs in here, girls."

He scratched a match on the rock and fed the flames, using larger and larger sticks until he had a roaring fire in the natural fireplace.

"Oh," said Timothy, disappointed, "I thought you were going to make a fire without matches."

"Some other time. To-day we are going to

cook without dishes. Here, Francis, you take this pail and get some water from the brook."

"Where did you get the pail?" said Belle.

"Found it growing on a tree," replied Amos. "This is a wonderful place—everything here you need."

"I saw him take it out from behind a rock," Claire cried. "He has been here before."

"We're going to have bacon and fried eggs, and pancakes on a stick," announced Abbott. "And each one is going to cook his own pancakes."

Father was cutting long sticks, and peeling the bark from the ends. Abbott had found several flat rocks about eight inches across and was tumbling them into the bed of glowing coals. Stanley had taken some eggs from his coat pocket, while Amos produced a package of bacon. Abbott hunted until he found a long flat piece of bark. He washed it clean, then poured some of the pancake flour into it; working as if the bark were a platter, he moistened the flour with water and stirred the mixture carefully with his knife. He worked it over and over until it

began to look like Grandmother's dough, then he patted and flattened it into a long strip.

"Bring a stick, somebody," he said.

Six sticks appeared before him like magic.

"Hold on—hold on!" he cried. "I'm not such a rapid cook. One at a time, please."

He wound the strip of dough around the end of Claire's stick. "Now sit down in front of the fire and take it easy. Hold your pancake in the heat, turn it until it is done, then pick it off and eat it. Next!"

Soon six sticks were twisting and turning over the fire, as the dough browned. Some of it burned, but that did not matter. How good it smelled, and when it was done, how good it tasted as it was pulled off bit by bit, and eaten, very carefully at first, for it was scorching hot.

Meanwhile Abbott and Stanley lifted the hot stones from the coals with strong forked sticks. On each stone they made a ring of bacon, and in the middle of the bacon-ring broke an egg; the bacon held the eggs as safely as any pan, the hot stones were the stove, and soon there were fried eggs and bacon for everyone.

"Oh dear me!" cried Trudy. "Did you ever smell anything so perfectly hungryish in all your life? We can cook without dishes, and isn't it fun, but however are we going to eat without spoons?"

Father produced some spoons which Mother had tucked into his pocket and there was no further trouble.

After dinner there were no dishes to wash; only the stones to cool and roll out of sight, the smouldering fire to smother safely in earth, and the fingers to wash in the brook. Then they all lay down in the shade of the evergreens and looked at the wonderful view which spread out before them.

"A beautiful sight," said Father, gazing at the great mountain.

"Some splendid trees there," Amos answered.

"That is a forest," said Abbott, "and there is nothing more wonderful in the world. Except for old Mother Earth herself, there is nothing more necessary to us all than the forest. A tree is a wonderful thing by itself, but a forest is more than a collection of trees. Look at that now, on

the side of the mountain. Many, many, many trees, all growing together. Some are older than the others, just like people, and the big trees take care of the little ones, and the little ones help the big ones. A forest, as it grows, makes its own soil, for the leaves fall and decay, the trees collect moisture, and roots run through and stir up the earth; animals live in the forest that live nowhere else; plants grow there that are different from plants which grow in open spaces; the forest protects and shelters. It keeps the brooks from drying up, and the land from hardening and being washed away by floods. It assures good farming lands in this way. The forest wants to be a friend to man, and man ought to protect and care for the forest in return."

"I should think a great thing like a forest could take care of itself," said Timothy, chewing a blade of grass.

"The forest has enemies," replied Abbott, "and part of my job out West was to protect the forests from them. Some are little, and some are large; some are human, I'm sorry to say, and all of them can do a great deal of damage that

takes nature years and years to remedy and not much of which she can prevent. Take fire, for instance. Imagine a great fire leaping from tree to tree over there—a crown fire, they call it when it runs along the tree-tops. I've seen crown fires in the West that ran faster than the swiftest man, dropping sparks and flaming branches that started ground fires in every direction. All the animals and birds are doomed in a fire like that. Forestry teaches you to prevent things of that sort. Then there are pests that eat the trees; forestry teaches you to destroy these, and the quickest way to do it. Forestry shows men how to use and not abuse a forest—to renew the trees, to cut out the old ones, and to keep the forest always, for coming generations, strong and useful."

"Say," said Timothy thoughtfully, "I guess, instead of being a farmer, I'll be a forester. Amos has told us lots like this, but not the way you have. Where can I learn all these things? You have to go to a kind of school, don't you? Shall I have to go out West to learn?"

Abbott laughed. "Why don't you combine

forestry and farming, Timothy? They go hand in hand. There is plenty to do right here in Todd's Ferry."

"Are girls ever foresters?" Trudy wanted to know.

And then Stanley told them of the young woman who kept a fire lookout, far away in the western forests; of the time when he had taken moving pictures of her, climbing up the many stairs that went up the steep rocky face of her mountain to her tower; of other pictures showing her in her cabin where she slept; on the road to the village, twenty miles away, going for her supplies; of the bear she shot, and the pets that came each day for food.

"Who owns all this land here?" said Timothy. "There don't seem to be any houses in sight. It's a pretty lonely spot."

"Oh, different people in Todd's Ferry," replied Abbott, "and you're not so far away as you would think. The station is right over there, beyond that hill; the new State Road is laid out just the other side of the valley, at the foot of the mountain, and it's not so far in a bee line to Mr.

Johnston's house. Henry White's father owns that piece to the east, and a Mr. Little this on the other side, I believe. Mr. Turner has a good bit over by the State Road, hasn't he, Amos?"

"Yes, and Jonas owns that wood-lot we just came through."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Belle, "but you know all about the place, Abbott."

"That's what I was sent up here for—to get the lay of the land."

"Yes, but I'd like to know what for," persisted Timothy.

Abbott pulled Timothy's ear, but before he could say a word, there sounded behind them such a horrible roar and groan and bellow that everyone except Abbott and Stanley jumped to their feet in terror.

"Don't be alarmed," drawled Abbott, "it's only my little Carmencita, singing!"

"Goodness me!" said Amos, drawing a breath of relief, "I hope she doesn't give us the second verse. I don't care for her voice."

CHAPTER III

ACRES AND PLANS

THE children had imagined that Abbott and Stanley would spend all their time playing with them, teaching them to ride Carmencita, and planning one picnic after another; so, when the two men took the burro, loaded her with surveying instruments, tent and camping kit, and went away without even mentioning where they were going, without even letting Aunt Theresy know when to expect them back, there was a great commotion among the "We Four—Lots More." No one could find out a single thing, although there was a suspicion that some of the grown people knew more than they would tell. The children would not even have known about the surveying kit if Amos had not met the outfit on the road to Prattville as he was peddling his fish.

"Looked to me as if they were headed over the mountain way," he said. "But they just hailed me and kept on going."

"Oh, never mind," Francis consoled the others. "Come on up to the big house and we'll explore the quarry. Claire and Isabelle haven't half seen the top of the hill."

Belle was spending the day with the girls, so they all tramped over the fields from Grandfather's to Mr. Johnston's house. He and Miss Margaret were on the wide piazza. He called them up to visit a while.

"I declare," he said, "it's funny how I always get my wish. I was just thinking how nice it would be if Timothy should happen over to-day. I wanted to ask him how old he is. Let's see, Timothy, you have a birthday soon, don't you?"

"The twenty-fifth of September," was the prompt response. "I'll be thirteen on that day, and on the twenty-sixth of September I'll be going on fourteen!"

"My, how very rapidly you grow," laughed Miss Margaret, while Mr. Johnston nodded thoughtfully.

"That's all right," he said. And then he got out of the rocking-chair, and reached for his hat which hung on a nail by the door.

"Suppose we all go for a walk."

"We were going up to show Claire and Isabelle the hill back of the quarry—you come too," begged Trudy, skipping by his side and smiling up at him.

"I think we'll go the other way. I have something to show you down the road."

They went through Miss Margaret's lovely garden where the fountain was splashing in the little grass-edged pool, and where the sun-dial stood among the rose-bushes, out over the grass to the drive that led down the hill to the main road. Mr. Johnston pointed to the left. "I suppose you know that's the hill where little Judith lived—the little girl who was almost caught by the tornado. These are some of the apple trees, away down here by the wall. And the pines over there were part of her father's wood-lot. They were tiny seedlings then."

Just where the road from the little red house met the other, he paused.

"Timothy," he said, smiling, "would you object to having your birthday present a little ahead of time?"

"I should say not!" cried Timothy. "I'll take it now."

"Timothy!" exclaimed Trudy. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

But Mr. Johnston was chuckling. "Well, there it is," said he, waving his hand toward the hill.

Timothy looked about in amazement. So did the others. They looked up in the trees; they looked up in the sky; they looked at each other; and then they looked at Mr. Johnston.

My, how he was enjoying their astonishment!

"It is right there in plain sight. I'm going to give you an acre of land on Judith's hill."

"For all my own? To do just what I want to with? Mine, to keep?"

"People don't usually give birthday presents and then take them back again, do they?"

"Oh, gee, but that's great! I certainly do thank you for my present. Say, won't Grandfather be surprised? Say—oh, I wish Abbott was home. I want to consult him about my land." He looked up at the trees, and at the field beyond. "Which acre is it?"

"It begins directly opposite the road from Trudy's house. We'll have Abbott survey it soon and draw a plan, and then I'll have the deeds made and recorded, and it will be your very own."

Timothy strutted down the road, while the rest chattered all at once. But Mr. Johnston was speaking again. "And just so you won't be lonesome when you are up here, working on your land, I'm going to give Trudy an acre—wait a minute—and one to Belle and to Francis."

"Oh, my darling Santa Claus man!"

"Why, Mr. Johnston, I'm afraid Pa won't let me accept it."

"But, Mr. Johnston, maybe I shan't be here to take care of it. You know Father and Mother are on the way home, and when they come I'll have to live with them. But it's wonderful of you just the same."

"Stop—stop—it's all arranged. Your father's plans are very uncertain, Francis, and if ——" He stopped suddenly. "As I was saying, I've seen how interested you all are in the woods and the fields and out-of-doors generally,

and you know that is my work in Washington. I need helpers, all I can get, young and old, so I'm giving you this land to see what you can do. I'm giving it to you to use, you understand. You made good on earning your trips to Washington with canning and preserving. Now here is another proposition—what are you going to do with this?"

"Where are Belle's and Trudy's?" Claire was asking, while Isabelle said, "Which is yours, Francis?"

"I've planned to give Trudy the next piece toward the main road, with Belle's just beyond," Mr. Johnston replied. "And the one for Francis lies just above Timothy's. His is nearest our house. As soon as Abbott gets back from ——" He caught himself. "As soon as Abbott comes home, I can show you exactly where they all begin and end."

The grown folks were not as surprised at the news as the children had expected, and at the next club meeting Belle said, "I think they knew about it all the time. Anyway, Pa said I could keep my acre and I never thought he would.

Pa's awful independent, but then, he thinks a lot of Mr. Johnston."

In a day or two the men returned from their mysterious trip, and Carmencita was back in Aunt Theresy's barn. Abbott surveyed the land for Mr. Johnston. The children went with him, of course. There were many discussions about the best use to make of the various pieces of land. Abbott made no suggestions, but was ready to furnish information on any subject. He asked just one question: "Are you going to begin now, or wait until you are grown up?"

"Now isn't that silly?" said Timothy scornfully. "Don't you think we know any better than that? And we've got you right here now, too, and there's no telling how soon you'll have to fly away out West again. Of course we're going to start right in and do something. I've been over my land several times, and I've decided to raise timber, and to get some sheep—they can graze on the hillside, and there's lots of rocks on one place that I can use to make a wall to keep them where they belong—and maybe I'll dig on some of it and see if I can find some Indian relics.

And if Grandfather will let me have the plough, I'll sow some of it to some kind of grain—what kind do you think would be best?"

"Whoa!" said Abbott. "All that on one acre? You've laid out a plan that will take some time."

"I know what I'm going to do," said Belle. "My land is down in the corner where the two roads meet, and it's most all second growth of timber, and there's lots of berry bushes on it. I'm going to get Pa to clear some of it, and plant raspberries and blackberries, and set out some dwarf fruit trees—they grow fast—and then I can make lots of jellies, right off my own land, and sell them."

"I wish I was sure of staying here," sighed Francis. "Just as things are getting exciting and I can go round like the rest of you, I don't want to have to go away. But I'm going to get Father and Mother to come up here every summer anyway. Oh, say, Abbott, couldn't I set out some little trees, like Mr. Johnston's, and perhaps more kinds, and have a nursery? And sell them to people, and make money?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

Abbott had marked Belle's acre, and Timothy's, and now they were tramping over the piece that belonged to Trudy. Here, the trees were more maples, oaks and beeches; there were broad sunny open spaces, with young growth and ferns. Across one side of the land, winding in and out, darting under the trees, running over masses of rocks, and in one spot leaping over a cliff so that it made a little waterfall, was a swift-rushing, busy little brook. Over their heads birds fluttered in the trees, rather silent now, for they were watching the little ones that had recently learned to fly. Once in a while a blue jay screamed. Claire discovered a black and white creeper, winding his way up a tree-trunk.

"Trudy hasn't told us what she is going to do with her acre," Abbott said.

"Oh, I've been talking with Mother and Miss Margaret, and I'm going to have a bird refuge. I'm going to put up notices that no shooting will be allowed, and I shall have places to feed the birds in winter, and I'm going to keep that swampy tangle down in the corner just as it is.

Mother and I are coming up here as often as we can, and watch the birds, and keep a record of them, and see how many we can attract. I think it will be a lovely place."

"And so do I," said Stanley Blake emphatically, when they told him of it later. "Please, Trudy, will you let me take moving pictures of birds in your sanctuary?"

On the way home they found a beautiful white birch tree with deep gashes and wide yellow scars in its lovely bark.

"There!" exclaimed Mr. Johnston, "somebody has been stripping my trees. If I only knew who it was, I'd read him a lecture. He has killed my tree, for that cutting has gone too deep, and he has spoiled all its beauty, as it is. I must put up some signs."

"We'll do it for you," promised the children.

Timothy and Francis printed several signs, in large black letters, on wood, "Do Not Strip Bark from Trees," and the club members tacked them up in prominent places. Once, while they were all standing on a wall, posting a sign a little way below the village, they heard a

trampling and crashing in the young growth beyond. The noise came nearer, and three or four white and red spotted faces looked inquiringly at the queer company on the wall.

"Oh," squealed Isabelle, "look at the awful things! What shall we do?"

"Don't be a goose," said Timothy; "they're only yearling cattle. I know them. They belong to Mr. White. His pasture is over that way, and they have broken through somewhere. We must drive them back. Come on, they won't hurt you."

Claire and Isabelle were afraid at first, but as soon as they saw the young cattle scampering obediently in front of the boys, they followed. The yearlings were not easy to drive, as they went nearer the pasture. They wanted to stay outside and explore the new country, but at last they were safely secured, and the gap in the wall found and blocked so that they could not get out again that night. The children stopped at Mr. White's on the way home to tell him so he could mend his wall. He was not at home, but Henry was milking and Dave Little was waiting for him.

"Say," said Henry, "do you suppose Mr. Kimball would let us boys go on a hike with him some day? I heard Amos talking about him, and I'd admire to go with him."

"Sure he would,—we'll tell him, and some day, when we're going off on a good time, we'll let you know and you can both go."

"I've met him," Dave told them. "He was over to see Father the other night. And Mr. Perkins was there, too."

"Pa was?" cried Belle. "What night was that? What did they want?"

"I don't know. My father sent me out of the room. He sent me on an errand to the store, and when I came back they were gone."

"That's funny," said Timothy. "I didn't know Abbott knew your father."

But when they asked Abbott about it, he only laughed at them and said, "Oh, you know if you work for Uncle Sam, you have lots of different things to do. But I'd like to have the boys go with us—the more, the merrier. By the way, I have to go up the mountain in a few days. How would it do to get up a party, make an all-day

trip of it, and have a regular mountain-climb? You ask the boys if they want to go. Stanley will go, for he wants to take some moving pictures up there." Abbott looked at the sky. "I reckon it will be a fair day to-morrow. Better go then. Ask your folks if they can get up a lunch on short notice. We shan't want to do any outdoor cooking on that trip. It's rather a hard climb, even if it is only a tame, eastern mountain, and we shall want a good, hearty meal. Amos has a day off to-morrow, too. We'll borrow a couple of horses and a big wagon and drive up as far as there is a good road."

"You can get a wagon from Mr. Perkins, I guess," volunteered Timothy, "and there is an old shed at the end of the road where you can leave the horses."

"I know it."

"Oh, you've been up there, have you? Say, was that where you went with Stanley, that time you took Carmencita and your surveying kit?"

But Abbott only laughed and would not answer.

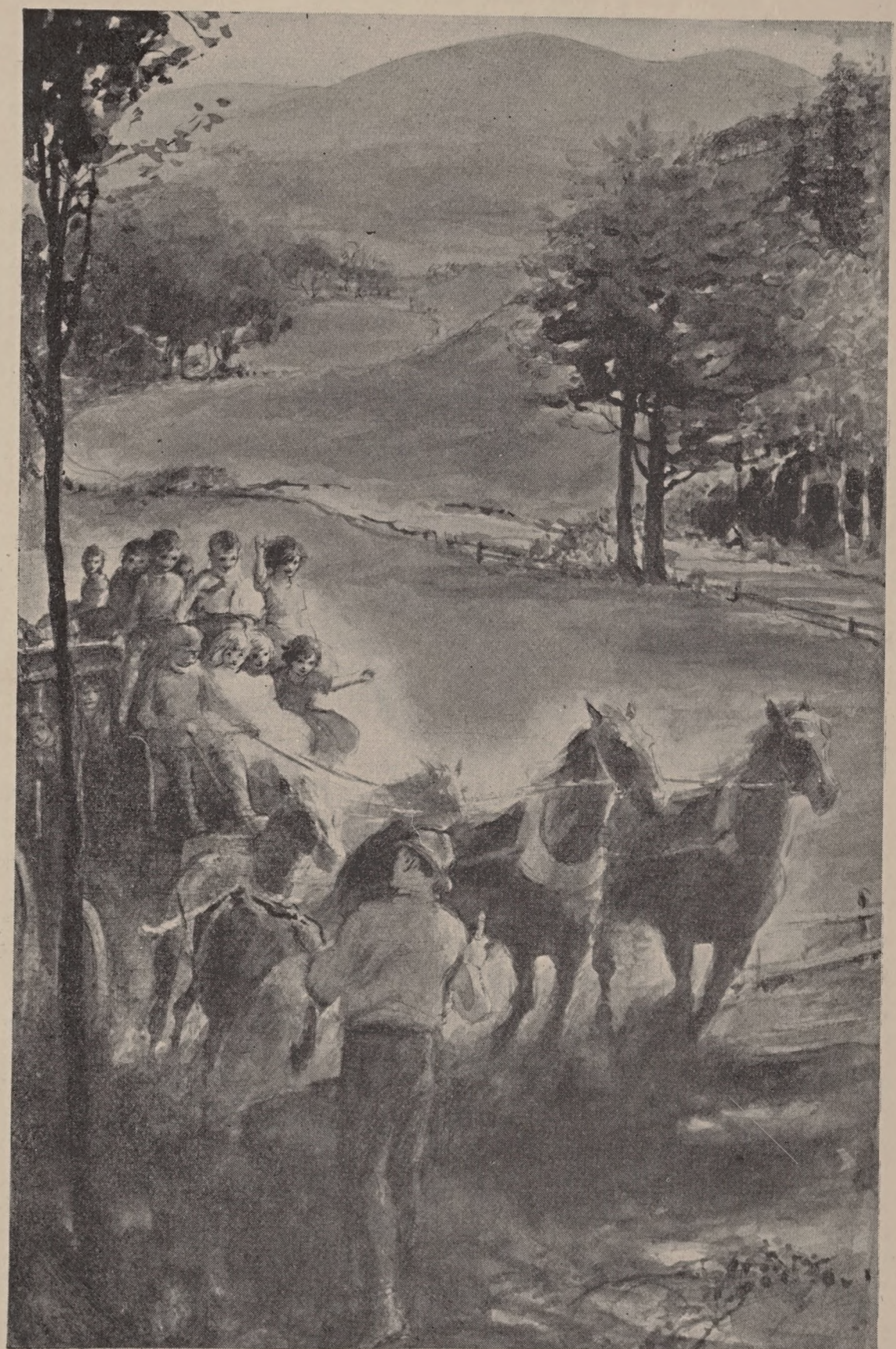
CHAPTER IV

UP THE MOUNTAIN

Belle told her father that Abbott wanted to climb the mountain next day, and they were all going with him. "He's going to borrow something to go in," she said, "but I don't know where he will get anything big enough to take us all. Stanley has to have his moving-picture camera, and there will be all the lunch, and sweaters and things. We shall need them on the mountain-top. If there is any wind, it will be cold on the top."

After Belle had gone to bed Mr. Perkins sauntered over to the store and borrowed Bill, the big boy that helped Mr. McAdam, for the next day. Then he and Bill had a talk, and when no one was awake in Mr. Perkins's house, he and Bill went into the barn and began taking out the autos and wagons there.

Next morning, the children, waiting at Grand-



THEY SHOUTED TO ALL WHO PASSED THEM

mother's, heard a clattering of hoofs coming up the hill, and Bill's voice, "Get-ap—get-ap, there!" just like Mr. Perkins. And then—four horses clambered into view, dragging something big enough to hold the mountain party and all their belongings—the old-fashioned stage-coach, with Bill high on the driver's seat, but higher still, on the seat that crossed the roof, was Belle, waving her hand and shouting gleefully, "Look what Pa found!"

Mr. Johnston and Miss Margaret had come down to see them off, and Mother and Father were there, too. The girls, with Timothy and Francis, scrambled up over the big wheel to sit beside Belle. Six on the seat was rather crowded, so the boys sat on the top with the lunch, and clung to the rail. It seemed very high, away up there. Bill cracked his long whip, and away they went to Aunt Theresy's house. Abbott and Stanley were waiting, and they cheered when the stage came into view.

"Well, well," said Aunt Theresy, "isn't that clever of your father, Belle? How natural that old stage looks. I've ridden in it many a time,

and I always sat on top if I could. But you children up there will have to look out for low bridges."

Before they could ask what she meant, the horses started, and a branch of a maple tree in the pasture swept sharply into their faces. "Low bridge!" shouted Timothy, ducking another branch, and they all lay over on their sides until the tree was safely passed. After that they watched for overhanging branches, for sometimes they hid sharp jagged dead limbs that would make ugly scratches. They were so busy looking for low bridges that only Trudy spied the tall, thin man waiting at the crossroads.

"Bill!" she called. "Oh, Bill—stop! There's Amos! Perhaps he will go with us. Oh, ask him. I have plenty of lunch."

But Amos had stepped out into the road and was leveling imaginary pistols at the oncoming stage.

"Hands up!" he cried, very loud and fierce; then laughed as he swung himself into the stage. "Did you think I was going to miss a picnic as good as this?" he called to the children above

him. "I engaged my passage as soon as I saw Perkins and Bill hauling out the stage last night."

They passed many automobiles, and how the folks stared. It was great fun to call to them, although they could not understand anything that was said in return. But the automobilists would laugh and wave, and turn around to watch the lively turnout.

"Let's make up a yell," said Francis, "and if we all shout it at once, everybody can understand us."

"What rhymes with Todd's Ferry?" said Belle.

"Berry—merry—cherry ——"

"I know," squealed Claire,

"This stage from Todd's Ferry
Has passengers merry!
Hur—*rah*, Hur—RAH, Hur—*RAH!*"

They learned it at once and shouted it to all who passed them; they called it in the streets of Prattville, and at all the lonely little farmhouses that they saw on the mountain road. Children

waved to them, dogs barked and ran out as they dashed by; but at last there were no more houses, the road grew narrower and steeper, and Bill let the horses slow down into a steady walk. The stage brushed against the trees now, first on one side, then on the other, and the children had to lie down on the roof and hide their faces.

Bill stopped the horses to rest them. Amos got out. "Better walk a bit now," he advised. "Stretch your legs and save the horses. Trudy, do you remember this place?"

They were passing the site of the saw-mill where Amos had brought the children on their tree day, a year ago. The saw-mill had come down to Todd's Ferry later, and almost taken Aunt Theresy's great pines, but to-day the camp was gone and the men were far away. Underbrush was springing up among the ragged tree-stumps, blueberry bushes were trying to hide the chips and bark that were cluttered about, and only the great ugly pile of sawdust remained to show where the mill had stood.

"Oh," shuddered Trudy, "let's hurry. I never want to see this place again."

Several automobiles crept past them, chugging up the steep grade.

"Boarders," explained Timothy; "parties going to climb the mountain. That first machine is from Todd House. I guess the others are from Prattville. Lots of people climb the mountain every day in summer. That man on top has plenty of company."

"Is there a man on top of the mountain?"

"The fire warden," said Abbott. "We'll pay him a visit, and ask him to show us about his work."

Bill had stopped the horses in an open space where the automobiles were parked. Short green grass covered the field; there was an old barn with the boards falling apart, and near by, the cellar of what had once been a large building.

"The old hotel," said Amos. "It burned down one night, and no one has had courage to build another. Too hard a place to get to—nobody came except the folks that climbed the mountain, and they didn't stay. We can leave our traps right here, and eat when we come back."

"I'm hungry now," said Isabelle; "why don't we eat first?"

"You couldn't climb a mountain right after eating, don't you know that?" said Timothy. "Didn't you learn that out West? But you can have one sandwich. I guess that won't do any harm. I'm going to have a couple myself." And he tore off the paper from the box of lunch that Grandmother had packed for him.

"Put on your sneakers, everybody," commanded Abbott. "We'll go up over the ledges."

Amos produced a pair of old rubbers from his coat pocket. "No sneakers for me," he said. "Good old boots and rubbers—then I'm ready for anything."

Bill decided to stay with the horses, so they left him and tramped across the grassy field that led to the thick growth of pines encircling the mountain. Timothy started off on the run.

"Now quit that, Timothy," said Abbott sternly; "this is a real mountain climb, and I'll tell you what to do, or rather, what not to do. The first thing is not to use up your wind in the beginning. Take long slow steps, and take it

easy. Don't be afraid to turn around now and then, and enjoy the view. We have all day, and we're not going to hurry, and we are going to see all there is to be seen."

Timothy and Amos had climbed the mountain before, but never before had they really seen the mountain. The trail, marked with pieces of white cloth, tied on the bushes, led them through a little hidden opening in the pines—and Abbott saw an owl sitting motionless on a dead branch. They climbed in the bed of the brook, dry now, but in early spring impassable—rushing full of cold foaming mountain water—from the melting snow. Abbott showed them the gullies that undermined the banks on either side of the boulders and made that a treacherous place to walk. He removed dangerous loose stones, sometimes throwing them to one side, more often packing them between others to make easy steps and improve the trail. When they reached the timber line, instead of merely looking through the thinning trees to find the white rag that marked the end of the trail, they learned from Abbott to notice the trees growing shorter and more

scraggly, with smaller branches that would let the powerful winds of the high places rush by without tearing the trees to pieces. Abbott showed them too, how the winter snow lay so heavily as to stunt the growth of the trees, until finally they were scarcely more than little bushes. And then came the bare slippery ledges.

Here the trail was marked by broad, white arrows, painted on the rocks. Now, for the first time they saw more than the arrows—the marks and scratches made on the ledges by the great ice-sheet that had slowly pushed its way over the mountain-top, thousands of years before. Here they were glad of their sneakers, for they could walk over the slippery, steep ledges without fear. They saw other parties that had forgotten to bring rubber-soled shoes, and they were scrambling and sliding and screaming, while some crawled up on hands and knees.

It was not far now to the top, and Timothy raced ahead. They found him sitting by the fire warden who laughed as the others appeared.

"Guess you must be the rest of the Todd's Ferry party," he said. "This young man has

told me all the news, and now he wants me to point out all your houses, and tell him all I know about forest fires. Which of you is Mr. Kimball? I'll just leave the fire stories to him, for the little bonfires we have here can't compare with the fires he must have seen in the West."

"Some other time," promised Abbott. "Now will you show the children your map and let them see what you would do if there was a fire?"

The fire warden explained the map that was mounted under glass, and divided so that all the country was marked out into districts. "You see, we have a headquarters in each district," he said, "and I can get them all by telephone. There are fire-fighting apparatus stored where each man knows about it, and if I spot a fire with my glasses, I locate it on the map, telephone to that warden, and he gets hold of his men, starts out as fast as he can, and if he needs help, he notifies me, and I send others."

"Isn't it lonesome up here?" Trudy inquired.

The warden laughed. "It might be on a rainy day, but then I'm not here on rainy days, so I don't mind it. All through the summer there are

lots of people here, just as you see them to-day." And he turned to explain it all over again to another group that had just reached the summit.

Stanley had set up his moving-picture camera, and was working while quite a good many people gathered to watch him. The children were so proud to be with him, that they crowded close by, and so never noticed when Abbott went back to talk long and seriously with the fire warden. Neither did they see the warden give Abbott a map, covered with figures, or hear him say, "That would be one of the best things that could happen!"

"Time to go," called the men at last, and with one final look at the lovely rolling country spread out below them, one more view of the sparkling little blue lakes, they turned for their downward trip. Amos led this time. "I'll show you a short cut," he said, and soon they were back on the open meadow and running down the slope to where Bill lay asleep in the stage.

How they panted—and how their knees shook—for the last part of the trail had been steep and rough, and the sloping meadow so slippery with

dry August grass that they could not stop, but had to keep on running.

"Everyone lie down for fifteen minutes," Abbott said decidedly. "No one must eat until he is rested."

At the end of the fifteen minutes, what a difference! Rested and hungry, how good the lunch tasted. The horses had had their dinner, and when they were harnessed into the stage, they trotted off as fresh as young colts. Bill had to hold them in with all his strength, and to stand on the brakes all the way down the mountain road.

"Go home round the station, Bill, will you?" begged Timothy. "It's longer."

There was plenty of time, so they took the longer way. And when they stopped at the store to leave Amos, and chatted with Mr. McAdam, he said, "Well, there is somebody at the big house that will enjoy seeing you folks. Stage has just gone up to Mr. Johnston's with a passenger. Didn't you expect him?"

"Expect him? What do you mean? Who's come?"

"Why, Donald, Mr. Johnston's nephew that was here a couple of years ago and nearly blew himself up on Fourth of July. He has just come up from Washington."

Donald, at the big house, was rather cross and discontented when the children arrived.

"I didn't want to come," he grumbled to Francis, "but Mother was invited away, and sent me up here. It's too slow here—nothing to do but stay out-of-doors, nothing ever happens, same old people here ——"

"Oh, Donald," cried Trudy, running around the corner of the house with Claire and Isabelle, "I'm so glad to see you! And I want you to meet my friends. Claire, this is Donald Johnston, from Washington. Isabelle, this is Mr. Johnston's nephew, Donald. Claire and Isabelle act in moving pictures, but they are up here on a vacation."

Donald's scowl vanished. He brushed his hand over his black hair that would curl when he didn't want it to, and when Isabelle asked him if he was going to stay long, he replied, "All the rest of the summer, I think."

CHAPTER V

THE GROWN-UPS' MYSTERY

"I'M going down to the store," said Father, one evening, a few days later.

About the same time, Mr. Perkins sauntered out of his house, saying, "Going over to the store a while, Mother."

Mr. Turner called to his housekeeper, "Any errands down-town?" and went out to harness.

Mr. Johnston appeared at the door of the farm-house, saying, "All ready, Jonas?" and Grandfather took his hat, and said, "Don't sit up for me. I'm going down to see McAdam."

"I'll go too," said Timothy, throwing his tools on the floor. He had been trying to carve a sign, "TO THE QUARRY."

"No, you won't," was the prompt reply. "You will stay right here, and you'll pick that clutter off the floor, too."

Timothy banged about the kitchen and muttered under his breath till Grandmother sent him to bed, but next day, when a crowd of the school children were on their way up to see the land that Mr. Johnston had given the "We Four—No More," he asked Bill what they all did down at the store.

"I don't know," Bill replied. "They all came in, the folks from your end of the town, and my uncle, and the manager of Todd House, and Dave Little's father, and oh, I don't know how many others, till I thought there was going to be a town meeting, and then they all went out in the back room, and Mr. McAdam told me to tend store, and I couldn't hear a word they said. They were still there when I locked up and went home."

"Did Abbott come?"

"Oh, yes, he came in first with Mr. Blake. They had a long roll of something, and they talked with Mr. McAdam before the rest came."

"They're up to something," declared Belle, "but never mind them now. Here's where my

land begins, right here at this stone. Come on, let's climb over the wall and go up through the fields."

The other school children had heard about the good times that Trudy and her friends were having with Abbott, and had begged to go on some of the hikes; they had become interested, too, in the work with the trees, and when Mr. Johnston had suggested making signs warning people of fire dangers and asking for help in preventing injury from fires, they had quickly responded. To-day they were going to tramp over the children's land by themselves, as Abbott and Stanley had gone on another mysterious trip. They planned to make a trail through Belle's land to the old cellars that marked the place where little Judith had lived when the hurricane had destroyed her home, a hundred years before. The boys had axes to clear the trail, and the girls had pieces of red cloth to mark it. Belle's land was rather open, and the making of the trail was easier for that reason; they soon reached the cellars and sat down to rest.

Claire had brought a pair of field-glasses when

she and Isabelle came back, and now she looked through them at the houses, far below.

"I can see your grandfather, Timothy," she said. "He's out in the hay-field with Ben Dobson. There's somebody with them. It looks like —it is—it's Stanley Blake, and they are all looking at a big piece of paper!"

Then everyone had to have a peep through the glasses, but it was too far to see what was on the piece of paper, and of course they could not hear what the men were saying. If the children had been there, they might have seen Stanley pointing to certain marks on the paper and saying, "Little owns that piece—he's all right. That belongs to McAdam, and he's willing—here is Turner's land, and he's a regular trump. He gave a hundred dollars in cash, besides—but right there, in the middle, that's what sticks us ——"

And Grandfather answered, "The only way I know to find out is to go to Concord and look it up."

But the children were high on the windy hill, and so the mystery was as deep as ever. Not one of the grown-ups would answer the simplest ques-

tion. They only laughed and winked, and said, "Don't you wish you knew?" and were as aggravating as possible. So there was nothing to do but wait.

And while they waited, the children tramped the fields and woods, under Abbott's direction, and placed signs where he advised, trying to lessen the danger of fire. "For," he said, "now is the time to do it. The woods are as dry as tinder, and the village is full of boarders who wander about, smoking, and making fires to roast corn and fry bacon, and if they aren't careful, Todd's Ferry will have a fire."

"If Todd's Ferry ever had a forest fire, I think I'd die," said Trudy. "It almost makes me cry to think of trees being burned, and if anything should happen to Aunt Theresy's pines ——"

"No need of a fire if we take precautions," said Abbott. "But we must educate folks. Timothy, hand me that sign with the poetry on it. I'm going to put it right here, where every boarder who comes to bathe or picnic can't help seeing it. Who wrote it, anyway?"

"Isabelle—isn't she smart?"

"Oh, it was something like a jingle I heard once. I only changed it a little, and besides, Trudy's mother helped me."

"Pretty good sign," approved Abbott, holding it out at arm's length and reading it aloud.

"Twinkle, twinkle, little spark,
Lurking in the forest dark—
Up you go, on windy days,
Starting many a deadly blaze!
So, traveler, when a spark you see,
Stamp it out, and save a tree!"

"Yes, that's certainly good. Say, Isabelle, would you mind if I copied that? Perhaps I could use it somewhere else. Maybe, some day, when you are working on location in some of the big National Parks, you will look up and see your own jingle staring you in the face!"

"I think we ought to save that for our own park," objected Timothy.

"Oh, don't be stingy."

"The Todd's Ferry Park isn't known yet. It's not even a dot on the map. Just a little land, and some big trees on it. And the trees aren't

a patch on the California ones either. Only a few people come here anyway. I don't think it's a very grand place. Only a measly little country village."

"Look here, Donald Johnston, you stop that right off! Todd's Ferry is—is—is ——" Timothy was stuttering with rage. He had jumped to his feet and was striding toward Donald who was laughing at his indignation.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Donald," cried Francis. "Todd's Ferry is good enough to be your uncle's summer home, and he is one of the biggest men in Washington; and it's Timothy Todd's home, and he's just exactly right to stand up for it. I wish I could live here always. I wish I needn't ever go away. I think it is a beautiful place."

"Come, come," interrupted Abbott. "Todd's Ferry is going to be perfectly able to take care of itself, and as for people not coming here, why, before long ——" He stopped abruptly, very red in the face. "Nearly gave the show away, that time," he said, under his breath. And aloud, he went on, "It takes time for all good places to

become known. Why, the Yellowstone Park was discovered six times before people would believe that there really was such a place. Sit down now, and get over being mad, and I'll tell you about the man who was first to see it."

Timothy was still glaring at Donald, but Trudy and Claire pulled him down between them. Abbott sat in the middle of the circle of children.

"John Colter—and no true American ought ever to forget that name—was a skilled hunter and trapper with the Lewis and Clarke Expedition that explored the Columbia River region. On the way back, Colter asked permission to leave the expedition and hunt, trap and trade with friendly Indians near the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers. This was in 1806, and he spent a year or more in the woods, with two companions, meeting, some time in 1807, a trader named Manuel Lisa who was only too glad to get the services of such a skilful man as Colter. Lisa was going to the country that Colter had just been through, but he turned back at Lisa's request, and later went from Indian tribe to tribe, trading. Once,

while he was with a party of Crow Indians, they were attacked by the Blackfeet, and Colter was obliged to fight on the side of the Crows. He distinguished himself, was wounded, and decided to get back at once to Lisa's camp. So he took a direct line, and traveling through new country, went hundreds of miles alone, and with a wound in his leg. It was on this trip that he crossed one corner of what is now the Yellowstone Park, and discovered the boiling springs, the great tar spring, and saw the Falls of the Yellowstone and the Grand Cañon. Imagine him, resting on the rim of the Cañon alone, and seeing for the first time that wonder and glory! Yet, when he told of it, no one would believe him. They said he was crazed with fever from his wound—that he had made it all up—that there could not possibly be such things in that region, probably not anywhere in the world. No one who had hunted there had ever seen them, so, of course, they did not exist. As long as he lived, very few people could be found to believe that he was telling the truth. And after that, the Park was discovered by others who were not believed, so, you see,

Timothy, it sometimes takes a long time to teach folks anything new."

"You haven't told how Colter escaped from the Indians," said Francis who had heard Abbott's story before.

"That hasn't anything to do with the Yellowstone Park."

"Never mind," Timothy said, "it's Indians, and I want to hear it."

"That came later. Lisa sent Colter back to the Blackfeet Indians, with a man named Potts. They were in hostile country, the Indians were on the warpath, so the white men trapped by night, remaining hidden by day. Early one morning, when they were in a canoe after the game of the night, they heard a great trampling on the high river-banks above them.

"'Indians!' said Colter.

"'Buffalo,' said Potts. 'Are you afraid?'

"As they came to a place where the river-bank dipped, they saw the Indians—five hundred of them, and were at once surrounded and told to come ashore. Potts fired at them, and was instantly killed by the shower of arrows that re-

turned his fire. Colter came ashore. The Indians recognized him as the white man who had fought with their enemies, the Crows. They took his arms and ammunition.

"'Are you a good runner?' said the Chief.

"Colter knew what that meant. He was to be given a chance—to run away from five hundred Indians. Now he was really a wonderful runner, but he knew this meant his life. 'I am a poor runner,' he said. They took away his clothes, gave him a start of several hundred yards, and the race for life was on! Colter dared not turn. He ran as he had never run before, outdistanced all but one, tripped and killed that one—and dove into the river, four or five miles from the place where he had been captured. He swam under water, and fortunately saw a mass of driftwood making a sort of raft at the end of an island. Diving under this, he found a place where he could keep his head out of water, and yet be hidden. The Indians pursued him. They swam into the river. They hunted over the island. They even walked on the raft under which he shivered, but at last they went away. Not until night did

Colter dare to leave his hiding-place, and then, without clothes, without food, without a weapon, he started for Lisa's camp, six days' journey away."

"He never got there, did he?"

"Of course he did," said Timothy.

"Yes, he did, but no one understands how. He lived on a root that the Indians had told him about, and, although the sun blistered him, the thorns cut his flesh and the cold night winds froze him, he reached Lisa's camp. Soon after that he came to the settlements, married, and, I hope, lived happy ever after. Anyway, that is all we know about him."

"Gee," sighed Timothy as Abbott finished, "I'll bet those Indians felt silly when they couldn't find him."

Abbott nailed up the sign, and they started for home. This day's work finished the territory near the lake—they had been at the bathing beach—and Abbott said that next day they would make a trail through the woods to the place where he had taken them with Carmencita—the lovely spot with the wonderful view of the mountain. "That

ought to be better known," he said, with a twinkle in his eye. " There are great possibilities in that place. Let's introduce it to the boarders, and to the people of Todd's Ferry. Just about a nice walk from the village, too. It ought to be popular before we get through with it."

Timothy had learned to ride Carmencita, and enjoyed jogging over the roads and fields, but Donald scorned the burro and had teased Mr. Johnston for a saddle horse. He rode by himself, for he would not be seen with Timothy and Carmencita, and went for long rides frequently. Once, after he had been over toward the mountain, he said to Trudy, " I saw that place Abbott is so crazy about, to-day. It's quite a pretty spot, that is, for up here, and while I was riding by I saw Stanley and Abbott come out of the trail. They had surveyor's instruments and they were measuring the land. Do you suppose they are going to buy it? I thought Abbott seemed pretty interested in it."

" I've seen Turner over there," said Amos, who was selling Mother a fish, " and McAdam, too."

" Amos," said Trudy suddenly, " were you in

the store that night when all the men were there? Do you know what they were talking about?"

"What night was that?" said Amos. "Got to be on my way. Expect a big trade to-day."

Father laughed, but Trudy said, "Well, I've found out one thing! I've found out all the grown folks seem to be terribly interested in that piece of land!"

CHAPTER VI

WANTED—A CLOCK-MAN

"ANY old brooms?—Any old brooms? Shovels or pitchforks—any old brooms?"

Far down the road sounded the sing-song call. Mr. Turner heard it and turned his head to listen. It came nearer—it grew louder and louder, until it was a shout just around the corner of the house.

"Shovels and pitchforks? Any old brooms?"

Mr. Turner straightened up from his work on the harness as Timothy appeared in the barn-yard; then Mr. Turner gave a loud call, "Minnie! Minnie, come out here!"

His housekeeper came out through the shed, wiping her hands.

"Mercy on us!" she exclaimed. "What on earth is it?"

In the barn-yard stood four small hairy legs surmounted by a crate-like arrangement of old brooms. From the front of the mass looked out

the disgusted face of Carmencita, and rising from its midst was Timothy's tousled head.

"It's that donkey-critter I was telling you about," explained Mr. Turner, "and Timothy, with a load of junk."

"Not junk," objected Timothy. "I want all the old brooms you have, and I'll take any old shovels or pitchforks, too. I don't care how broken they are. We're going to mend them, and they will do just as well, if they only get fixed good and strong."

"I generally burn my old brooms in my spring bonfire, but I may have an old spade somewhere. What are you going to do with them, if I may ask?"

"If you'll lift these up on this side, I guess I can slide out, and while Carmencita is resting, I'll explain."

They all sat down on the grass, and Carmencita wandered about, cropping here and there.

"Well, you know Mr. Johnston gave us four acres of land up on the hill, and he wants us to learn to use and improve it, and Abbott has been giving us points. You know Abbott is a Forest

Ranger, and he has had lots of experience. Well, he says the greatest danger to the woods is fire, and there's practically no fire protection right here in Todd's Ferry, so I'm going to establish a fire station on my land, and I'm collecting these things for that."

"Oh, I see. But what good are old brooms?"

"Oh, of course they wouldn't be much use with a big fire, but if you found a little one just starting, you could beat it out with a wet broom —and even if it was quite well under way and was burning along the ground, you might check it by scraping the leaves and things ahead of it away with a pitchfork. And of course you know they stop fires by digging ditches, so I thought I'd better have some of all kinds and be prepared. Say, Mr. Turner, did you know I've found a spring on my land? Well, I have, right about in the middle of the lot, and I'm going to build a shack there, and store my supplies in it, and keep food there, you know, canned things; and have some cooking kit, and a bunk to sleep in, and I'm going to face it toward the mountain, because you can see the mountain from that spot,

and I'm going to arrange a set of signals with the fire warden up there—up on the mountain, I mean ——" Timothy's tongue was twisted with all his eagerness, but Mr. Turner understood.

"Great!" he said. "I'll help you all I can. Come with me."

He led Timothy out behind the barn, and showed him a pile of old boards and posts.

"See that?" he said. "You may have as much of it as you want to build your shack, if you can get it up to your lot. I'm too busy to carry it up for you, but you're welcome to it."

"Good gracious! Why, Mr. Turner, I'm ever so much obliged to you. I can build a splendid shack with that. Francis is going to help me. You see, we learned quite a little about building when we put up the sap-house. And I can easily pack it onto Carmencita. She will carry anything anywhere."

"Not now? Not with that load?" It was the housekeeper speaking. "I found two brooms for you. They aren't very old, but perhaps you can use them."

"Oh, thank you. I'll come again for the lumber."

They heard him, going toward Grandfather's, still calling, "Any old brooms? Any old brooms? Shovels and pitchforks—any old brooms?" though there were no houses, and the only people he met were boarders out for a walk. They took to the bushes by the roadside as the queer creature overtook and passed them, then stared as long as it was in sight.

Next day he went back for the lumber, and he and Francis began work on the shack. Dave and Henry heard about it, and came up from the village, begging to be allowed to help. Even Donald strolled over from the big house, but he only sat on a stone and watched them, criticising their work. It was not finished in one day, but when it was done, it really was quite a shelter.

The girls came up for a housewarming when it was finished, and brought a lunch. It was large enough for them all to sit in, if they did not move about much. Three of the girls sat on the bunk that was merely a shelf, propped against the wall, and could be used as seat, bed or table, or

dropped out of the way entirely. Timothy was in the narrow doorway, and the rest were squatting on the floor. The shack was about eight feet high, with a flat roof. Outside was an extension of the roof, making a shelter under which Timothy had stored his supply of old brooms and shovels. The roof itself was thatched with pine boughs; and the inside of the shack was lined with oil-cloth, to keep the rain from coming in through the rather wide cracks between the boards. Mr. Turner's lumber had not matched very well, but Amos said you got better ventilation if the walls weren't too tight. Timothy had set up an old stove, and the stove-pipe stuck bravely out through the roof. There were windows, but no glass in them. The most important thing was the cupboard with a lock, built against one end, and holding several cans of soup, corn, meat and baked beans, and a large piece of a broken mirror.

"That's to flash to the mountain with," said Timothy. "Abbott is teaching me the code, and we're going to arrange with the man up there, so if there is a fire I can notify him at once."

"That's silly," drawled Donald. "He could see it before you could. And you don't think you're going to live up here, watching for fires, do you?"

"It isn't either silly," said Trudy indignantly; "it's splendid, and just what everybody ought to do, be prepared. My Santa Claus man says so, and he says too, the woods now are just as dry as they can be, and there isn't a sign of rain, and there's no telling what may happen, so there!"

"Oh, I don't care. It's nothing to me. I don't have to stay here."

"Say," said Dave, "I saw Mr. Blake in the store to-day. He had been to Concord."

"I wish I knew what he went for," said Timothy. "Come on, let's go home now."

When Timothy reached the house, he went to the shed-attic to put away some tools, and decided to go to his room by way of the secret passage. He did not mean to be especially quiet, but he was thinking very hard about the mysterious ways of the grown-ups, and came down the kitchen stairs slowly and softly. Just before he turned into the room, he heard Stanley's voice—

"That piece of land belongs to Adoniram Thissell, the clock-man. I looked up the records. Now that is the key to the whole situation, but where is Thissell? We must get hold of him before we can go any further."

"Sh!" said Grandmother, and Timothy heard no more, but he knew who Mr. Thissell was. He was the old clock-man who used to live in a little house way back in the woods, but had not been seen in Todd's Ferry for a long time. He was old and deaf, and considered rather cranky. His chief occupation was wandering about the country mending watches and clocks.

Miss Margaret broke her watch, and Mr. Johnston said, "Well, Adoniram is due here pretty soon. He will fix it for you, Margaret."

She asked Timothy to be sure and let her know if he heard anything about the clock-man's being at the village, but from the twinkle in Mr. Johnston's eye when she spoke, Timothy made up his mind that he too was in the secret that had sent Stanley to Concord, and that seemed to pop up whenever Mr. Thissell's name was mentioned.

Grandmother was making green grape jelly.

There had been a jolly ride into the deep woods for the wild grapes, and now Grandmother, Miss Margaret and Mother were all making jelly. Timothy was interested in Grandmother's cooking. "I'll time it for you, Grandmother," he said. "I know how. I'll watch the clock. You tell me how many minutes it has to boil."

"Now be careful, Timothy. You know if I spoil this jelly, I can't get any more wild grapes. I'll just run up and make the beds, and you call me the instant the clock says twenty minutes past ten."

For three or four minutes Timothy watched the hands of the kitchen clock; then he heard Claire calling and went to the door.

"I'm timing the jelly," he said; "I can't come out now. You come in. It has to cook till twenty minutes past ten."

Claire had so much to say that the time flew, but still the clock did not say twenty minutes past ten. They could hear Grandmother overhead, walking back and forth as she made the beds. Then she came down-stairs. She looked at the clock. It was exactly quarter past ten.

"I'm watching, Grandmother," said Timothy, "and Claire is helping me."

Grandmother sniffed—then she ran to the jelly—she listened.

"Mercy!" she cried. "The clock has stopped. My jelly is spoiled!"

Claire looked at her little watch. "Oh, dear!" she exclaimed. "It is quarter of eleven."

"Why," said Timothy, "what made the clock stop? I thought Grandfather fixed it."

"I did fix it," said Grandfather's voice from the other room. "What's the matter now? Won't it go?"

"Go?" repeated Grandmother. "Go! It has been stopped for half an hour, and the green grape jelly is ruined!"

Grandfather strode over to the shelf and took down the clock. "I'll fix it this time!" he said.

"Oh, Father, let it alone. Leave your watch here, and when Adoniram comes, we'll have it fixed right."

"I can 'tend to this clock as well as Adoniram Thissell, and I'm going to do it, and what's more, I'm going to do it now!"

He went over to the side table in the living-room, and swept the newspapers that covered it onto the floor; he threw back the cloth; he sat down and adjusted his spectacles; he took a screw-driver from the table drawer, and began to take out the screws from the clock. Timothy and Claire hung over the table, watching. Soon, the table was a litter of wheels, wires and tiny screws. The clock-face, looking so queer without any hands, lay in one corner.

"Don't touch anything," cautioned Grandfather, "because I know just what everything is and just where it goes, and I've got them all fixed the way I want them. Timothy, bring me the clock-oil."

Timothy brought the little bottle of awful-smelling oil and set it down carefully. Then he and Claire kept very still, looking while Grandfather took up this piece and that, peering at them, blowing, dusting, oiling.

Outside, in the shed, Dilly crouched before a mouse-hole. She had been there a long while and had been very quiet, so quiet that the mouse thought she had gone away. He poked his head

out. Dilly drew back into the shadow. He came out—and she sprang.

The door from the shed behind Grandfather opened a crack, and into the room marched Dilly, the cat, proudly bringing her game to show. She was fond of Grandfather, and when she saw him sitting there, she wanted him to see her prize.

"Prr-aou!" said Dilly, the cat, in her throat, without opening her jaws—and jumped onto the table, in the midst of clock-wheels and wires.

"Get out!" roared Grandfather. Dilly, terrified and astonished, dropped the mouse. He darted across the table. She leaped after him, and over went table, wheels, clock and all, as Claire dodged the fleeing mouse.

Grandmother came to the door and looked at the scene. "Pick up the mess, Jonas," she said with a sigh. "There's no use doing anything more until Adoniram comes. He'll have to straighten the thing out. And give me your watch. I'll hang it up, on the hook over the shelf."

"Adoniram can't come any too soon to suit me," grumbled Grandfather, as he handed his

watch to Grandmother. "Timothy, you pick up those pieces, and don't miss one. They all belong somewhere, but it's beyond me now."

"Say," whispered Timothy to Claire as she stooped beside him, "I hope that old clock-man comes right off. Everybody wants to see him for something or other, and I do too. I'm going to ask him what it all means!"

CHAPTER VII

THE CAMPING TRIP

EVER since Abbott Kimball had told them about his experiences in the far West, Timothy and Trudy had longed for a really truly camping trip; one where they could carry supplies and a tent, pitch camp at the end of a hard day's tramp, build a fire, cook supper, and then roll themselves up in their blankets and sleep out-of-doors all night long, far away from any house. They had told the other children, and Claire and Isabelle had teased for a camping trip before they left. Mr. Sims had written that their vacation might be cut short, as they would be needed in the picture before long. Father and Mother were in favor of the plan, and offered to go, while Miss Margaret and Mr. Johnston declared they wouldn't miss it for anything! Amos said if they didn't ask him, he would simply follow their trail, and Abbott had laughed and said, "Set

OUT FROM THE SHED WADDLED TIMOTHY

the day, folks, and get your traps ready. I'll furnish the tents, and the place."

So, this morning, they were starting. They had met at the farmhouse, and Grandmother and Grandfather were bustling about, looking at their packs and supplies, talking and laughing. It was a funny group in the door-yard. Mother and Miss Margaret wore khaki bloomers, like the girls, and had blankets strapped over their shoulders. Mr. Johnston had on knee breeches; Claire's field-glasses were hanging about his neck, and he carried a stout staff. Donald had decided to go, and had borrowed some old clothes from Ben Dobson. He did look so odd, just like Ben if you saw only his back, but not a bit like Ben if you caught a glimpse of his shiny black hair, so carefully brushed, or his soft white hands with their polished nails.

"I'll bet he will look different before we get back," giggled Belle to Trudy. "Where is Timothy? Why doesn't he hurry?"

"Come, Timothy," called Grandmother. "It's getting late and they want to start."

"I'll be there in a minute," was the answer

from the shed-attic. "Amos hasn't come with the buckboard."

Amos was going to drive the buckboard in case any of the women or girls should get tired and feel like riding. Abbott had said there really should be one horse on a camping trip, and Amos had agreed. He was going to carry the supplies too, for Abbott had promised that the children should take turns riding on Carmencita. Just as they were getting fidgety, waiting, they heard his horn, and soon the ears of the horse came into view over the crest of the hill. Amos drove swiftly up to the door and stopped with a flourish.

"Hello," he began—then—"Look what's coming!" They looked.

Out from the shed door waddled Timothy—and his kit! Over one shoulder was a great blanket; strapped on the other side was a hatchet, and hanging from his belt were—one coffee-pot, one tin dipper, one frying-pan, one tin plate; he wore a khaki shirt and trousers; about his neck was knotted a red handkerchief, the ends hanging down his back. On his head was a wide-brimmed straw hat, and on his back, like a pack, was a

bright-colored satin pillow. He carried a staff, like Mr. Johnston. He could just move, that was all.

"Mercy!" gasped Grandmother. "He has my best sofa-pillow! Timothy Todd, you take that pillow straight back into the house."

"Oh, Grandmother, it's only the cover. I left the pillow in the shed-attic. I had to have a cover to carry my sweater and extra shirt in. I shall put my clothes in it and use it to sleep on to-night. That's the way they do. I read it in a book."

"Extra shirt!" shouted Abbott, as soon as he could speak from laughter. "How long do you think we are going to stay? I have to be back in less than six months. There are important matters to be arranged."

"Timothy, dump that stuff," said Stanley. "You're not going on a polar expedition. Give Amos the camp kit and your sweater; yes, and the hatchet. It is a good idea to have that. What else is in the pillow? It's heavy."

"Some canned things. I read it was always a good idea to have something extra along. Oh,

yes, and my flour and bacon and rice and meal and tea—and the matches—they're in that bundle, I guess. I've been packing so long I've kind of forgotten."

Abbott hooted, but Stanley said to him sternly, "Stop that, now. The youngster has thought of everything. He could lead this trip himself, I believe, as well as you can. Timothy, put all your supplies into the buckboard. Abbott and I planned to grubstake this trip, but you never can have too much to eat. We may be glad you laid in a stock of provisions. But you needn't make yourself into the pack mule. You want to have a little fun on the hike. Lighten up your pack, and we'll start."

"Good-bye," called Grandmother. "Now do take good care of those children, and don't let them get their deaths of cold. You'd better come home to-night and sleep in your own beds."

They waved to her, and struck into the path that led down by the sap-house to Aunt Theresy's. Amos drove around by the road.

"He knows where to go," Stanley assured them. "You won't lose him."

"Where are we going?"

The grown folks looked at each other and laughed. "To a beautiful spot. You'll see."

As they tramped along, the road began to seem a bit familiar to the children; they remembered clumps of pine trees, the brook that chattered merrily beside them, and the place where the woods ended and the meadow lay before them.

"Why," called Timothy, "this is the place where we came before with Abbott. What are we coming again for? Why don't we go to a new place?"

"Perhaps the grown-ups haven't ever seen it," said Belle. "You know Abbott thinks it's pretty wonderful here, and maybe he wanted to show it to them."

"Oh, we have all seen it, thank you," laughed Miss Margaret, who was tramping with the girls. "That's the reason we are here now."

And not another word would any of the older people say. The children teased and guessed and wondered, but learned nothing.

This time they did not stay on the ledge where they ate their dinner before, but went until they

came to a place where a huge stone cliff overhung a level spot, carpeted with soft grass, and shielded by tall pines on the north side. There was a spring bubbling from under the cliff, and near it an outcrop of granite, exactly right for a camp-fire.

"Here we are," said Mr. Johnston, "and there comes Amos down the road. I hear the rattle of the buckboard. Loosen your packs, boys, and run over and help him tote the tents and supplies, for here we stay till to-morrow afternoon. Ladies, make yourselves at home. Your rooms will be ready very soon."

Abbott had brought three small tents for the women and girls, and as soon as Amos and the boys arrived with them, began to make camp. The men cut small saplings, trimmed them, and set them up with the forked tops crossed, the width of the tent apart; then stretched a rope between, pegging the ends firmly to the ground. On this rope they hung the tent, spreading it wide, like the letter A, and pegged down the sides. They fastened the end flaps, and behold, the rooms were ready!

"Where are we going to sleep?" inquired Donald. "There doesn't seem to be room for any more tents."

"On the ground, goose," was Timothy's scornful reply. "Men don't need tents in summer."

Donald looked rather doubtful, but Mr. Johnston showed him the warm blankets that would wrap tightly about them and explained that the fire would burn all night, and they would sleep near it.

"Won't it be great!" said Francis. "Oh, I do hope something exciting will happen. Amos, are there any bears around here?"

"I've never seen any. They do say there are wildcats on the mountain in winter."

"There, don't scare us," begged Mother; "a squirrel would look like a wildcat to me, in the night, out here."

The camp soon began to look very western and wild. The boys gathered firewood, and later collected spruce branches for the beds. Carmencita wandered about, nibbling the grass, and nosing at anything that came in her way. After dinner, Mr. Johnston and Amos went for a walk; Mother

and Miss Margaret took a nap; Stanley set his camera up and made some photographs, while Abbott wandered off by himself, unrolling his surveyor's tape measure. The children ran about, exploring the place.

Suddenly they heard Timothy's voice on the cliff above them.

"Come on up and see what I've found!"

They looked at the steep face of the rock.

"How do we get up there?"

"Around the back. It's easy. Hurry—this is something strange. I've made a discovery."

Amos grinned. He and Mr. Johnston had just returned. "Let's go up," he said. "I think I know what he has found."

"So do I," said Father. "I remember this ledge now. The place has changed since I was a boy, the trees have grown up so, but I know now what is up there." And he called, "Can you rock it, Timothy?"

There was a moment's silence. Then—"Jiminy, it moves!—Oh, say, hurry—hurry!"

They found him standing by a great boulder, fully as large as a room—oh, much bigger than

the shack, that was balanced on a ledge of rock; the boulder was of irregular shape, and in its crevices earth had lodged. In the earth the wind had planted seeds, and tiny plants and ferns grew there; under it was a deep hole that looked very dark and mysterious. The rock on which it stood was cracked, and in the crack grew two beech trees. Their yellow leaves had scattered over the boulder for many years, and some of the dry dead leaves clung to the sheltered spots. But the wonder was that the boulder was balancing on the ledge by its smallest, thinnest section—

"Look!" shouted Timothy. "Now you watch it!"

He leaned his whole weight on the boulder. Slowly, but surely, it moved! And then it moved the other way. Again he did it, and again it rocked!

Trudy screamed. It was so big, and Timothy looked so small.

"Oh, look out—it might crush you!"

"No danger," said Abbott. "But I didn't know there was anything like that on the lot. Timothy, you've surely made a discovery. That

is what is known as a 'rocking boulder,' and they are not so very common. That great mass of rock was brought down, millions of years ago, from some place in the far north by the ice that covered this whole country—a great glacier that moved slowly and irresistibly, but that was melted at last, and in its melting left that rock poised in such a manner that a slight push would move it."

"And has it been here all that time?"

"Yes, you see it is on the top of this ledge, and the winds have kept it clear from obstructions, and it is too heavy a mass for anyone to move. If buildings had been made here—well, anyway, it has never been disturbed, fortunately."

"Another natural attraction for the ——" began Mr. Johnston.

"For the what? Oh, why won't you tell us?"

"Stop, brother, don't tease them any more. Tell them."

"After supper, I will," said Mr. Johnston solemnly.

Timothy looked at his watch. "It's after four," he said; "let's go right down and have supper now."

CHAPTER VIII

THE SECRET TOLD

"BEGIN!" said Timothy. "Begin! You said you'd tell us after supper, and it's after supper now!"

The supper was over, the dishes were washed and stacked ready for morning, the night's supply of firewood lay ready by the fire, and the whole party sat watching Mr. Johnston. He stood with his elbow on a great rock, looking across the valley at the mountain, rosy in the sunset. Shadows were falling in the valley, but here and there one tree, taller than the rest, caught a ray of sunlight and glowed emerald-green above its dusky brothers.

Mr. Johnston looked down at Timothy and laughed. "Why do you think I can tell the secret? Don't you think the rest know it too?"

"Do you know it, Amos?" said Trudy.

"Your father and mother know, Trudy," exclaimed Claire. "I can tell by the way they look."

"Oh, we all know," admitted Amos. "And practically everyone in the village knows but you children. You're slow!"

"Do Grandfather and Grandmother know?"

"And Mr. Perkins?"

"Yes, and Mr. Turner, and Mr. McAdam, and Belle's father, and the Senator—and Aunt Theresy, and ——"

"Well," interrupted Timothy, "now I want to know."

"It concerns us all," began Mr. Johnston, "and really it concerns you children more than anyone else, for you began it. Oh, I know you didn't have any idea of what you were doing, but as I look back, I can see that it really started the day that Trudy came to Todd's Ferry."

"But I didn't know anybody here then," said the bewildered Trudy.

"True, but as soon as you came, all the children in Todd's Ferry tried to show you what a splendid place the country was; Amos, here,

taught you to see the wonders of the woods, and you, with your new friends, began to love Todd's Ferry—and the country for itself—more and more. You found a friend among the Christmas trees—and he found several—and there were some more good times together. Then Father and Mother came, and Todd's Ferry was home to us all.

"Next year, you children did some worthwhile things for yourselves and learned that children all over the United States were doing similar things, and you earned the reward offered by your Government—your Washington trip. There you saw a little of the great work that the Government is trying to do for its people, and you became even more interested in the grand out-of-doors. After you came home again, you had a chance to do something for someone else, and, from what you learned at Washington, you wanted to save Aunt Theresy's trees. And all the time you were busy with your own affairs, we grown-ups have been watching you. Lately we have done some talking and planning among ourselves ——"

"I know—you had meetings at Mr. McAdam's store—Bill said so."

"Keep still, Timothy," said Belle. "Don't interrupt."

"You have given me a valuable idea in regard to my work in the forestry division. I talked it over with the Senator; he sent Abbott up here to look over the ground; Abbott has made a favorable report, and we older citizens of Todd's Ferry are now ready to do something worth-while ourselves." He stopped. "My voice is tired. Go on, Abbott, it's your turn."

Abbott sat up and clasped his hands about his knees.

"It's only this," he said; "Mr. Johnston has persuaded the United States Government to take the land where we are now, the valley below, and the mountain, for a National Park ——"

"A National Park!"

"Right here in Todd's Ferry?"

"Here—where we live? Why, heaps of people come to National Parks —— And they have automobile roads—and free camp sites ——"

"We have a free camp site this minute," laughed Amos.

"Wait," said Abbott, "that's only part of it. The principal thing is that the Government is going to establish a School of Forestry here, probably on the identical spot where we now are, if everything goes well."

Timothy leaped to his feet. "A school? Where they teach you how to be a Forest Ranger? Where you can learn everything about woods, and trails, and bears, and volcanoes —— Oh, say, can't we find a geyser or something, the way John Colter did? Abbott, do you suppose the mountain was ever a volcano? Mightn't it erupt again some day?"

Trudy was hugging Mr. Johnston. "Oh, my darling Santa Claus man!" she whispered. "You're always giving somebody something!"

"Don't give me all the credit. I couldn't have done a thing if the men who owned the land hadn't been willing to give it to the Government. There was only enough of an appropriation to buy the mountain and the valley, and Abbott reported that this place was much the best for the

school site. There wasn't any money to buy it, but as soon as the Todd's Ferry folks knew that, they said, 'What of it? We will give the land for the school!' "

"And that was what you were surveying for?"

"Stanley took pictures all over the place. How did you know who owned all the land? Did Mr. Perkins really give some?"

"Perkins started the thing," replied Amos, "and made McAdam give that piece over there when he wanted it for a sheep pasture. Perkins told him he'd learn more about sheep-raising from the school than he could figure out for himself in a thousand years."

"Are grown people going to the school?" inquired Timothy. "I thought school was for boys and girls."

"There will be lectures for old and young, and demonstrations and exhibits of the best ways to manage farms and wood-lots. We know that we must learn a great deal. You children have opened our eyes," was Father's answer to this.

"What will the school look like?"

"I expect it will have four walls, and two

chimneys, perhaps more, and—oh, yes, some windows, and a door or two so you can come out if you don't like it ——"

Mr. Johnston got no further with his nonsense, for the children raced at him, climbing over him, and clamoring for him to be serious.

Abbott was fumbling at his pack. "Here," he called, "here's a sketch I made from the plans."

They crowded about him, looking eagerly as he showed them the drawing of a beautiful stone building with two long low wings at the sides, and a tall tower above the main entrance. "It will face the mountain," he explained, "and will show from a long distance. There will be a fine view of it from the new State Road."

"And people, riding along in their automobiles, will say, 'Oh, what is that lovely building?'" said Claire, "just like the tourists out West."

"How soon will it be done?" Timothy wanted to know. "Did Grandfather say I could leave Miss Fields' school and begin to study forestry right off?"

"Who gave this very spot where it is going to be?" said Trudy.

Nobody answered. The grown-ups looked uncomfortably at each other.

"Told you so," said Amos. "I told you they would find it out the first thing and you see I was right."

"Find out what?"

Mr. Johnston coughed. "Well, you see, that hasn't been exactly given yet, although I have no doubt it will be, very soon. This piece of land belongs to Mr. Thissell, the clock-man, and we haven't had a chance to speak to him about it yet."

"Oh," cried Timothy, "so that's why everybody is so anxious to see the clock-man, is it? Where is he? Why doesn't somebody find him? Can't you write to him?"

"We have tried to, but none of the letters seem to reach him. They say he is due here very soon now, and then we shall talk the matter over with him. I have no doubt that everything will be all right."

Amos grunted. "You haven't had much ex-

perience with Adoniram, I see," he muttered to himself.

They had all been so interested and had so much to say about the wonderful secret that no one had thought about time until Miss Margaret said, "The fire is almost out. Why, it is ten o'clock! Bedtime."

In the middle of the night, Timothy woke suddenly. He sat up, bewildered for a moment, then he remembered. They were camping on the site of the new school. There was the smouldering fire; there were Amos and Uncle Sam, snoring in their blankets; Francis lay rolled in Miss Margaret's steamer rug. Stanley and Abbott were in sleeping bags. No one stirred—yet there had been a strange noise! There it was again—a heavy step beyond the bushes—a dragging and shuffling as of something being pulled over the ground! A bear, carrying off a man, would sound like that, Timothy thought. The moon was low in the sky. The trees cast long black shadows that might hide wild animals. Timothy reached over and touched Abbott. He was awake instantly.

"What is it?"

"A noise—out there! Hear it?"

Abbott listened. The step and scuffle came again, but further away.

"That's only Carmencita, browsing. She's pulled up her stake, and gone looking for fodder. She likes meals at all hours. I know her step." He sat up and looked about. "Oh, see the northern lights!"

Timothy turned. There, where the mountain loomed like a great black cloud against the dark sky, were long fingers of light, now narrow, now broad, reaching up to the zenith, and flickering away to the horizon. Sometimes they were white, again creamy yellow, and as Abbott and Timothy looked, the whole northern sky flamed for an instant with rose, then the lights faded. A bird gave a sleepy chip. They heard a whippoorwill begin to call.

"Lie down and go to sleep," said Abbott. "It isn't morning yet."

"Almost, isn't it?" said Timothy.

In the morning, camp was a busy place. "We will get breakfast," said Miss Margaret, as she

and Mother came from their tent. "You children have a good time."

But soon the children, splashing at the spring, heard her call in surprise, "Why, where is all the food?"

Everybody ran. Of all the sandwiches, the cold chicken, the loaves of bread, the frosted cake, the turnovers and doughnuts,—not one crumb remained! Not even the papers were to be found! And the baskets were gone, too!

"Who can have taken it?" cried Claire.

Timothy remembered the noise in the night. He remembered what Abbott had said about Carmencita's meals at all hours. Abbott remembered, too. Together they ran for the burro. She had wandered a long way, but they followed her trail, and found it scattered with napkins, bits of paper and pieces of the baskets. Then they found the baskets, or what was left of them, broken and chewed, and very, very empty! Carmencita, returning for her breakfast, met them and sent forth her song when she saw her master.

"You rascal," scolded Abbott. "Up to your old tricks, I see."

"Here is the thief," he called to the rest of the party. "I'm sorry, but Carmencita has eaten all the supplies."

"She's even eaten some of the baskets," added Amos, examining the wreck. "Well, I see where we don't have any breakfast."

Timothy went silently to a place behind one of the big rocks. He came back, loaded with tin cans, bundles and boxes.

"You can have these," he said. "It's lucky I brought them along. Here's some bacon in a glass jar—that's all right—and the flour and meal I put in tin boxes. I read about that in one of the Government leaflets I got in Washington. I guess you can cook enough to last us until we get home."

On the way home, they were tramping through the woods to the village when they struck the trail of some person who had gone before them. Francis noticed a broken branch. Isabelle found footprints in a muddy hollow. And once, far ahead, they all caught a glimpse of a dim figure, bent under some sort of a pack.

"Make believe there are Indians in the woods,"

cried Timothy. "I can see them hiding all about us!"

But the truth was really more exciting than Timothy's make-believe enemies, for when they reached the store, Mr. McAdam said, "Well, well, folks, you must have been right behind Adoniram. He just tramped over the mountain, and he's ridden up with Jonas, to stay the night."

CHAPTER IX

THE CLOCK-MAN COMES—AND GOES!

Mr. Thissell had come at last! And just when they wanted him so badly! They looked at each other. Timothy leaped from the counter where he had been sitting.

"Come on," he cried. "Let's hurry. We'll go right up to Grandfather's and tell Adoniram all about it. Then we can fix it right up the first thing in the morning. How soon will they start to build, Abbott?"

Mr. Johnston held him back.

"Wait a minute," he said; "this is a matter for us older people. We thought up this plan, and we are going to carry it through without any help from you youngsters. You have had all the glory of the Todd's Ferry improvements so far. Give us a chance."

"That's right," added Father. "You keep

out of this, Timothy. And all the rest of you children. We'll see Adoniram and talk it all over with him. As soon as we get his consent, the thing is done. Then we shall send word to the Senator, Abbott will go to Washington with his report, Mr. Johnston will set the wheels of the Forestry Department spinning, and then, hurrah for the Government School of Forestry at Todd's Ferry!"

"There was one thing you didn't mention, Mr. Johnston," said Abbott. "You didn't say anything about the new movement to reforest the state by enlisting the boys in the work." He turned to the boys. "That's one of his plans, and it's going to be a success, too. The Government will teach the boys to set out and care for trees, to know what kinds will thrive in certain soils and locations, and will give prizes for the best results."

"That's the reason my Santa Claus man gave us all some land," cried Trudy. "He wanted us to be interested, didn't you?"

Mr. Johnston laughed. "Oh, well, a little land won't come amiss to anyone, and there will

be plenty of uses for it when you all go to the new school."

Amos strolled in from the doorway where he had been watching the boarders on Todd House piazza.

"Better have a class for summer boarders, too," he said. "Every single person on that piazza is making birch-bark napkin rings, or picture frames or something, and there's a pile of bark on the floor big enough to make a fleet of canoes."

"If they took that off my trees ——" began Timothy.

"It can't be helped now, but perhaps next summer the boarders will all be helping set out shrubs on the grounds of the new school," said Miss Margaret. "Come, children, we really must get home."

At the farmhouse they found Mr. Thissell sitting in the living-room, before the table, with all the parts of the clock spread out on it. Grandfather was in the rocking-chair, watching him. The table looked very much the same as it did before Dilly upset it, but Mr. Thissell seemed to

know where every little wheel and spring belonged; he picked up this one and that, oiling and filing, and fitting them together. Timothy wanted dreadfully to ask him about the land, but Mr. Johnston's last words before going on to the big house had been, "Now, remember, this is our scheme," and he did not quite dare. He did follow Grandmother out into the kitchen, though, and whisper to her that now he knew the mysterious secret, and he was dreadfully alarmed when she said right out loud, "Yes, Jonas said they were going to camp on the school site."

"Hush!" hissed Timothy. "Mr. Thissell will hear you, and we must not tell him till Mr. Johnston comes over after supper."

"Gracious me!" exclaimed Grandmother. "Adoniram can't hear me. He's as deaf as a post. You have to get right up to his ear, and then shout as loud as you can."

Timothy was relieved to hear that. He decided to stay in the house that evening. Perhaps he could hear the grown-ups when they shouted at Mr. Thissell. If they had to talk as loud as that, surely it wouldn't be any harm to listen—

you couldn't help hearing! And he could hardly wait to have Mr. Thissell say "Yes."

Mr. Thissell only looked at Timothy when he went in to say, "How do you do?" and grumbled to Grandfather about the weather, about the clock, about the cat, and most of all, about the boarders in Todd's Ferry. "Too many folks in this village nowadays," he said. "A man can't take a walk in the woods without running into a parcel of young folks, climbing over the walls, tearing down the fences, leaving the bars loose so the cattle get out—and they're so impudent, too. Look at you and whisper and laugh, then, next day, come to your house and want you to fix their watches and not charge 'em what it's worth, and growl over the pay.—This is a pretty poor clock, Jonas, but I'll do the best I can with it."

Timothy was indignant. At supper-time it was even worse. Mr. Thissell found fault with Grandmother's cooking, and asked for things that were not on the table, but Grandmother and Grandfather did not seem to mind at all. Timothy scowled, and if it had not been that he was so curious to know what Mr. Thissell would say

when the grown-ups told him about the wonderful plan, he would have gone up to the big house. But he stayed at home, and followed Grandfather and Mr. Thissell when they took a walk about the farm. Amos was lounging near the barn, and joined Timothy.

"McAdam's coming as soon as the mail is sorted," said Amos, "and Turner, and Mr. Johnston. Perkins will be here, and your father. Oh, Adoniram little knows what's going to happen this evening!"

"Where are your bees?" came Mr. Thissell's queer voice as they crossed the lot behind the house.

"We don't keep any," shouted Grandfather.

"Don't keep bees? That's no kind of a farm, without bees. And it's lazy and thriftless, not keeping bees. Bees are your best workers, and you don't have to pay 'em a cent," he chuckled. "They work all day, and store up honey that tastes mighty good on hot biscuits, I tell you. There's lots of crops you can't raise without bees to cross the pollen. This place would look a sight

better with a nice row of hives down under those trees."

"Adoniram thinks bees know more than folks," said Amos to Timothy.

As if he had heard the remark, Mr. Thissell turned to them. "You boy," he addressed Timothy, "you're pretty smart, I hear—why don't you get some bees? 'Tending bees would be a sight better than racin' round in the woods, tackin' up signs that nobody will ever read, and tryin' to make over the wood-lots. There's always been enough wood to use, ever since I needed any, and I guess there always will be. You take my advice, and get that city man on the hill to buy you some bees. I hear he's free with his money. Needn't be afraid of gettin' stung—you can make friends with bees, same as you can with hens—and, anyway, bee stings are good for rheumatism."

"Timothy," interposed Grandfather, before Timothy could make his angry reply, "I want you to go over to Trudy's and help the girls keep house this evening."

Mr. McAdam and Mr. Turner were coming

up the road as Timothy, dreadfully disappointed, went up the path to the little red house. All through the evening, while they were playing games, the children wondered what was happening in the farmhouse. They imagined the men sitting in the big living-room, shouting at Mr. Thissell, telling him about the new school, showing him the drawings, and explaining the wonderful and interesting things that would be taught there; they could almost see him leaning forward with his hand behind his ear so that he should not miss a word, and then sitting back and saying heartily, " Sure, I'll be glad to give my land! "

At ten o'clock Timothy went home. The meeting was over. Grandfather was locking up the barn.

" Well, what did he say? " cried Timothy. " Is it all settled? Where is he? Has he gone to bed? "

" I'll tell you all about it in the morning," was Grandmother's answer. " Go to bed now. It's late."

In the morning there was no place at the break-

fast table for Mr. Thissell. Timothy looked amazed. "Has he had breakfast so early?" he asked. Then he saw Grandmother's face. "Well, tell me," said Timothy.

At just about that moment the other children were asking the same question in their houses, and someone—mother or father—was telling the same dreadful story—just as poor Grandmother did.

"I'm sorry, Timothy," she began, "but you've got to know it—all of you. Mr. Thissell didn't like the plan, and he refused to have anything to do with it. He said a good many things I needn't repeat, and then he put on his hat and left the house. I don't know whether he went to the hotel or not. It seems as if our plan had struck a snag, but the men are going to see him again this morning and try to talk to him again. They hope that he will change his mind."

Timothy was speechless.

He went out, and across lots to Trudy's house. The girls were on the ledge under the great pine, sitting very quiet. Their handkerchiefs were rolled into tight little wet balls in their hands.

Tears dropped down their cheeks as Timothy came shuffling slowly through the grass.

"Isn't it perfectly awful, Timothy?" said Trudy. "Did you ever know anybody could be so mean? With all the rest willing, too. What can they do now?"

"Perhaps he will change his mind," Claire said. "I should think he would be so ashamed of himself!"

"And if they can't get that one piece of land, the whole thing is no good, for there isn't another spot suitable for the school, and the Government has only money enough to buy the mountain and the valley. If the townsfolk will give the land for the school, they will buy the rest for the park. That's the agreement, Mr. Johnston said."

Francis had come up, and was speaking.

"It's even worse than that," he went on, after a moment; "if we don't have it here in Todd's Ferry, the whole plan will be changed, and the school will be built in the West."

There didn't seem to be anything to say. They sat silent, until Timothy jumped to his feet.

"Well, there's no use sitting here like this. Let's get busy. The grown folks said they wanted to do this themselves, but I've just got to find out where Mr. Thissell is, anyway. Let's go down to the village and find him, and then we'll get some of the men to tackle him again."

"Yes, let's," agreed Trudy; "that wouldn't be interfering. That would be helping."

A little way down the road, they met Belle and Amos. Belle was very downcast, and even Amos was silent.

"Oh, Amos," said Timothy, "you were there —tell us all about the meeting. Grandmother won't say anything."

"It was pretty bad. I could see from the first that Adoniram wasn't taken with the scheme at all. He's terribly set in his notions, and he don't like the idea of strangers coming here. Adoniram is a man who wants to have everything just the same as it always has been. And he said there was too much schooling in fol-de-rols anyway. Said if he could stop it, he would. He never would give a foot or sell a foot of his land for a school to learn about trees and weeds. If

folks wanted to go to school, let 'em go where they could learn to spell and write their names, and add up figures so they could tell how much money they had in the bank, if they had sense enough to save any. Oh, I tell you, Adoniram made quite a speech when he got started."

"And he wouldn't agree to anything?"

"Not a thing, and finally he got mad clean through, and pretended not to hear, though we were all hollering loud enough to be heard over to Prattville, and at last he shouted, 'No—No—No, I tell you, no!' and put on his hat and took his kit and marched out of the house and down the road."

"We're going to find him," said Timothy. "We're on the way to the village now. We thought we'd get somebody to try again. You come on, Amos, and talk to him. Maybe he's beginning to be sorry now. Didn't anybody show him my leaflets from the Forestry Department? I put them on the table so he could see them. Perhaps he doesn't realize how important forestry is. Mr. Perkins didn't at first. I'll go back and get some of the leaflets, and let him take 'em

to read. Perhaps that would make him change his mind."

Amos shook his head.

"No use going," he said. "Adoniram has departed. He isn't anywhere in the village. I've been looking for him myself. He's gone again, and nobody knows where!"

CHAPTER X

AMOS LINES A BEE

TODD'S FERRY, next morning, was a very gloomy place. All the older people were more disturbed than they would admit to the children, and the children themselves were ready to cry with disappointment. It was when they were all sitting on the grass in front of the big house that Miss Margaret called from the piazza, "Children, Amos is telephoning. He wants you to meet him at the brook, near the Primeval Pines. He says he will bring Belle, and he wants you to get Abbott and Stanley, and start right away."

"I'm not going," said Timothy. "What's the use?"

"Oh, come on," teased Francis. "Anything is better than sitting here, doing nothing."

Timothy loitered behind, but when Abbott and Stanley joined the party, he was feeling better.

A little way from Aunt Theresy's house, they found Belle and Amos.

"What are we going to do?" asked Trudy.

Amos smiled.

"Going to hunt. I'm getting jealous of these two wild Westerners, with their stories of grizzly bears, and elk, and eagles, and forest fires, and so on. I've invited them to come along this morning and see some real hunting. It's time New Hampshire showed them something."

"What are we going to hunt, Amos?"

"A bee!"

"A bee?" It was Timothy who spoke. "Oh, gee—I won't hunt any old bees. They sting you—and all that old Mr. Thissell talked about was bees. I shan't go."

But when Abbott began asking eager questions, and saying that he had heard about locating bee-trees, but had never seen it done, Timothy felt differently. They were strolling along through the woods, and Amos was talking, when all at once he stopped.—"There's a honey-bee now—on that goldenrod. Might as well start now as any time."

"I'll chase him," shouted Timothy. "I can see him ever so far."

"Wait a minute," called Amos. "Come back here. That isn't the way to hunt a bee. Come back and get the ammunition."

The girls crowded about as Amos took from his pocket a small bottle filled with a colorless liquid. "Here it is," he laughed, "here's all the kit you need to hunt a bee. Easier than hunting grizzlies, isn't it, Abbott?"

"You're right," said the ranger, laughing.

He looked about till he found a little clearing where the goldenrod bloomed. He cut a tall branch from a bush, and, sharpening the end, stuck it in the ground among the goldenrod. Then he pulled the leafy top down, and sprinkled it with the liquid.

"What is it?" Trudy asked.

"Sugar and water, with a little honey. It is just about the consistency of real flower honey. All sit down now, and wait for the bees to find it. There ought to be a good many bees on this goldenrod."

"When they find your honey, what do we do?"

"Then we chase 'em, don't we?" demanded Timothy eagerly.

"Why, yes, in a way. We watch to see which way the bee flies—we 'line' him, as the saying is ——"

"Oh," cried Francis, "now I know what you mean when you say you make a bee-line for any place."

"Yes, you go the most direct way. A bee, laden with honey, will fly straight for the hive, or for the bee-tree, if he is a wild bee," Amos explained carefully.

"Oh, I hope we catch a wild one!" exclaimed Timothy.

They sat quiet now, watching the branch that had been baited. Bees came to the goldenrod, and buzzed provokingly over the low blossoms. At last, before any of the others could see him, Amos called softly, "One of them has found the bait." And then they saw the bee, circling against the blue sky, high above the honied branch. Down he came, now floating toward it, now flying this way and that; it seemed as if he would never alight. He flew up again on a puff

"Here's a Deserted House"

of a breeze—then he turned to the waving branch.

"He smells it—he smells it!" cried Belle.

The bee alighted on the leaves. They could no longer see him.

"Watch sharp, now," cautioned Amos. "As soon as he gets all he can carry, he will fly for the tree. See which way he goes."

"I see him—I see him!" screamed Timothy. "There he goes—to the north."

Amos scrambled to his feet—then he sat down again. "Wait," he said, "he will come back. We can judge how far away the tree is by the time he is gone. A loaded bee will fly about a mile in five minutes, and take perhaps two minutes to leave his load in the hive."

Timothy's watch was out before Amos finished speaking.

In the next fifteen minutes, other bees found the sticky sweetness, but none of them flew in the direction taken by the first bee. They seemed to be rovers, and Amos paid no attention to them. He was watching the north.

It was exactly fourteen minutes, Timothy said,

when Amos saw the bees coming again—several of them this time. They flew straight for the branch, loaded themselves with the bait, and flew again to the north.

"Time to move," said Amos, and they all tramped through the woods, after the bees. Perhaps a quarter of a mile further on, Amos rebaited the bush and set it up in another clearing, first waving it in the air for a few minutes. The bees found it again, and this time flew in a more westerly direction.

"It's a good hunt," he said, after he had set the trap for the fourth time, and the bees were coming in greater numbers and staying away only a few minutes. "We're almost there now."

"It would be a joke on us if it wasn't a bee-tree at all, but somebody's hives," said Abbott. "I hope they are wild bees—I'm getting honey-hungry."

"Looks like a bee-tree to me," replied Amos. "There isn't any house around here that I remember, but, to tell you the truth, I don't exactly know where we are, we have made so many turns."

Abbott laughed. "You may be a good bee-hunter, but you're a poor woodsman; you couldn't lose me in these woods. I'll bet I could lead you straight to Mr. Johnston's house—in a bee-line."

Timothy had been running ahead. They could hear him crashing through the underbrush. He called to them:

"Say, here's a deserted house! Come on—I'm right over here. Oh, hurry up and see what I've found!"

They hurried. The trees that had seemed so thick, stopped abruptly at the edge of an old, weed-grown, ploughed field. Beyond that was a house, staring at them from uncurtained windows —the house looked like a great face with eyes wide open. And the faded red door was like the mouth. Elm trees grew close to two sides of it, with branches that scratched the house when the wind blew. Tall old lilac bushes made a damp spot at one corner. The door-stone had fallen away from the sill, and ferns grew in the space between. No one had gone in at that door for a long, long time. The road ran by far below, for

the house stood on a high bluff, and a long winding driveway led up from the road. On the other side, they could see the gray barn, and the corn-crib standing on its stilts so that the rats could not reach the corn. Everything was very still. They stood and looked and listened. And then, they all heard it!

A low steady humming that seemed to come from the deserted house! It was dreadfully scary. If the sun had not been shining at eleven o'clock in the forenoon—if Amos and Abbott and Stanley had not been there—the children would not have stayed a minute. Even now, they trembled, and looked at the men.

Amos was puzzled. He looked all around. He looked down. He looked up. Then he laughed aloud, and pointed.

"See there!"

At the back of the house, high under the eaves, were some small round holes, each with a little shelf beneath it. The humming came from these holes! And then everybody laughed and shouted, and exclaimed, and ran closer to look.

The bees were coming and going from the

small round holes. They were crawling over the shelves before going inside to leave their burdens, or creeping out to go after more. This was the bee-tree!

"Oh, what a queer place!"

"Would you ever think bees would live in a place like this?"

Abbott spoke. "We can't take any of this honey. This is no wild bee-tree."

"It's a deserted house, isn't it?"

"Somebody lives here," said Claire. "See, there's a towel hanging on that line."

"Who does live here?"

They turned to Amos.

"We have found more than bees," was his answer. "I know where we are now, but I was completely turned about. I never came just this way before. This is Adoniram Thissell's house!"

"Come on," shouted Timothy, "let's see if he's home. I've got some of my leaflets. I carry them with me wherever I go, in case I meet him. He's got to read 'em and change his mind!"

"Surely he doesn't live here," said Isabelle, who had been looking in the window. "There

isn't any furniture in this room, and the door is fastened with a board nailed to the floor."

"He only uses the back part of the house," was Amos's explanation. "But I don't believe he is here."

"We'll see, anyway," said Trudy. "I'll go around and knock at the back door."

"He couldn't hear you."

"I'll make him see me."

They went round to the back of the house. In the orchard, bluebirds were darting from old tree to old tree, and now and then an oriole flashed through the air. But there was no sign of Mr. Thissell. They peeped in at the windows, and saw his stove with no fire, and his table apparently set for the next meal, but with all the dishes neatly covered with a red and white checked cloth. It was evident that he was not at home.

While they were prowling about, trying to find a trace of him, Abbott was wandering here and there, looking up at certain big trees, examining the distant hills with his glasses, and chuckling to himself.

He was more amused when he came back and

saw once more the dismal faces that had greeted Amos at the Big Pines.

"Isn't it terrible?" mourned Trudy, "to find his house like this, and then not to know where he is?"

"I'll bet you anything you don't know where you are yourselves."

"Of course we don't—and you don't either!" was Timothy's cross reply.

"Oh, yes I do, and when I show you, you will all feel better. Follow me now—up this hill, and over the wall."

They climbed up through Mr. Thissell's orchard, crossed an open field, went through a patch of woods, beyond the wall. Timothy began to look about him sharply.

"Somebody's been setting out new trees here," said Stanley.

"Say," called Timothy, "I know now! This is my land that Mr. Johnston gave me—and the shack is right over there!"

"Right here," said Abbott, pushing through a last clump of undergrowth.

There they were—directly behind Timothy's

shack. But when they turned to look, Mr. Thissell's house had disappeared.

"It's there, just the same," Abbott assured them, "and if you cut out a bit of this underbrush, and trim up the trees a little—I'll show you how, and it will improve your place, Timothy—you can see the house perfectly plain from the shack."

"Well, I declare," exclaimed Amos, "I never realized before that Adoniram's land came away up here."

"Do you know what I'm going to do?" demanded Timothy of the whole party. "I'm going to cut that vista right now, this minute, and I'm going to get Grandmother to let me live here at the shack, and I'm going to watch till that Adoniram Thissell comes home, and then I'm going down and tell him a few things!"

"Oh, you couldn't stay up here all alone."

"I'll tell you, Timothy," cried Francis. "We'll get all the boys to help, and we can take turns watching."

"I'll help," promised Amos, "but you won't need to sleep here, for Adoniram will stay three

or four days when he does come. He's likely to appear almost any time now to look out for his bees. Perhaps we have not done such a bad day's work, after all, even if we didn't get any honey."

"Come on," said Timothy, "let's go home now. I'll have to tell Grandmother before I begin work, and I want to get some supplies and bring them up here this afternoon. And we must see Dave and Henry, and Ben Dobson and Bill —they will like to stay here at the shack. I'm going to have an awful busy afternoon. Abbott, can't I borrow Carmencita?"

"Of course you can—any time you want her. Just go and take her. Don't bother to ask!"

CHAPTER XI

ON THE LOOKOUT

CARMENCITA was very busy and very indignant that afternoon. Four times did she climb the hill from the farmhouse to the shack, and four times did she amble down, with a boy on her weary back. Dave and Henry had come to help, and had brought something that delighted Timothy—a real ladder that Dave's father had given the boys. They offered to let Timothy keep it at the shack.

"We can climb a tree with it and see ever so far," said Henry. "I'll bet we could climb the Big Pines if we got a start with this ladder."

"I know something better than that," cried Timothy. "It's kind of a short ladder for trees, but it is just right to reach the roof of the shack. We'll build a lookout on the roof, and watch from there. We can draw the ladder up after us when we are in the lookout, and no one can bother us."

For Carmencita's fifth trip, they loaded the ladder and some of the old lumber from Mr. Turner's place on her back. She turned her head slowly to look at her load. She started reluctantly up the road, looked backward once more, and lay down! And there she stayed! Coaxing, threats, promises of dinner, carrots held temptingly before her—all were in vain. Finally the boys had to carry the ladder themselves. They left the lumber beside the road, and Amos, coming along in the buckboard, saw it—then he saw Carmencita, quiet and happy, and the ladder-tracks where the boys had dragged it. The tracks led toward the shack.

"Well, old lady," said Amos, "you've struck, have you? Guess I'll steal your job, and see how things are progressing on the hill."

He loaded the lumber on the buckboard and drove up the road. He met the boys coming back.

"Here you are," he called. "All your stuff. Your Mexican friend back there sent you her love and hopes you are having as good a time as she is."

"Cranky old thing!" scolded Timothy. "But I'm awfully glad you came, Amos, because I want your advice. I'm going to build a lookout on the shack roof. Do you think the timbers are strong enough?"

Amos gravely shook the "timbers"—old logs that Timothy had set into the ground himself. He looked at the roof, and he looked higher still. Then he looked at the ladder.

"Very particular about having your lookout on the roof?" he asked. "That tree at the corner looks good to me. You could make a ladder to reach the roof, then set this one against the trunk of the tree where it touches the shack, and I rather think it would reach the lower limbs. I'd help you build a platform in the tree, and you would get a good deal better outlook. Of course, if you're afraid to climb that high ——"

Timothy was diving into the shack. Out he came with a saw, hammer and hatchet.

"Get to work, fellows," he shouted. "Amos, you tell 'em what to do."

Before dark the lookout was done—a six-foot square platform on the lower branches of a pine

tree—and each boy had tried it. Amos put a rough railing around it, and they carried up a covered box, and filled it with food, a blanket, a spy-glass that Mr. Johnston had loaned them, and a mirror to flash signals to the man on the mountain.

That evening Timothy told the girls all about it.

"Gee, it's great," he said, as they sat on the ledge in the yard of the little red house. "We were going to have it on the roof, but then we should have had to cut down some trees to see Mr. Thissell's house, and even then we couldn't have seen it very well. Now we can look right down the hill and see his whole place, and as soon as we get a little trimming done, we can see the place where the new school is going to be, and the top of the mountain shows up just as plain—I'm going up there as soon as Carmencita gets pleasant again, and arrange some signals with that man in case of fire."

"Can you see the farmhouse?"

"Only the roof, and you can't see this little house at all because the trees hide it, but, say,

you get a splendid view of Mr. Johnston's house."

"Yes," added Francis, "and with the glass you can see the folks walking around on the piazza—their faces, I mean—and we saw Mr. Johnston driving down the road, ever so far."

"We must go up there to-morrow, girls," said Trudy. "We'll get Belle and stay all day and have a picnic. We can watch, and you boys can do something else."

"That's good," said Timothy. "We'll have a ball game. But we will be up in the afternoon. Perhaps there may be something else to do to the lookout."

Donald had arrived in time to hear Timothy's description, and was curious to see what the boys had done. So, after the girls had gone to the shack next day, he told Miss Margaret that he was going for a horseback ride and might not be home for dinner.

Abbott had made a fireplace on a ledge near the shack, and the girls were cooking their dinner when they heard Claire calling from the lookout: "I see a rider on a black horse."

In a moment Donald cantered up the hill and leaped from his horse.

"Is dinner ready?" he called. "Don't you want some company?"

"We want some help," said Isabelle. "You go down to the spring and get some fresh water. Here's the pail."

"I'm going up in the lookout."

"You get that water first, or you don't have any dinner."

Donald sauntered away to the spring. He did not come back for so long that Belle and Trudy went to look for him. The pail was by the spring, but it was empty and there was no sign of Donald. They called and called, and at last, they saw, in the shadow of a big boulder, something move. The grasses shook. In a moment a pair of feet waved, from under the boulder, then Donald's legs began to appear. He backed out from under the rock, dirtier than they had ever seen him, and more excited.

"There's a bear's den here," he announced, "and I'm going to get a big strong trap and set

it and catch the bear, and have his skin for my room when I go to college."

It was really quite a large hole. Donald had wriggled into it until he was out of sight, and it went even deeper between two rocks. The girls looked in. There was no doubt that some animal had been there, for bones and feathers were scattered about the entrance, but Belle scorned the idea of a bear.

"There aren't any bears around here," she said. "Pa says there hasn't been a bear here for years. Lots of times the boarders start bear stories because they hear noises in the woods at night, but every morning the bear turns out to be somebody's calf that strays away, and is just trying to follow somebody home, the poor little thing is so scared. I guess this is a fox's hole. Those bones look like chicken bones to me, and foxes are terrible chicken thieves."

"A fox skin wouldn't be so bad, especially if it was a silver fox. They are very valuable. Anyway, I'm going to set a trap."

"I don't believe the Santa Claus man will let you," said Trudy. "I know he doesn't like

traps. Anyway, this isn't your land. It's Timothy's, and you must ask him before you set any traps on his land."

The girls spent the afternoon in the lookout, with the field-glasses.

At stage-time they heard the automobile chug-chug up to the store, and then come nearer and nearer.

"Anybody coming to your house, Trudy?"

"I don't know of anyone, Belle."

Claire was watching the big house through the glass.

"I can see the stage," she called. "It's coming to the Johnstons'. There is Miss Margaret on the piazza, waving her hand to somebody—the stage is full of people."

"Let me see." Trudy took the glass. "Why, that's Francis—and Timothy—and a man and woman with them. Who is it? And there's Mr. Johnston in the stage, too.—Oh, do you suppose—yes, Francis is leading them up the steps. Oh, girls, it's his father and mother, come from Armenia!"

There was no more watching from the lookout

that day. The girls hurried to the big house, and found Mr. and Mrs. Lane waiting to see them. They were just as nice as Francis's father and mother ought to be, and everyone felt acquainted at once. After supper, they all walked over to the farmhouse, and sat talking about Todd's Ferry and Armenia, about Mr. Turner's maple sugar parties, and the new school that Mr. Johnston was planning, and the American mission school in Armenia, and most of all, about how necessary it was to find Mr. Thissell, and about the lookout in the tree, and of so many other things. They talked till after eleven o'clock!

Mr. Lane looked at his watch, and jumped up, saying, " My goodness, Madam, we never sat up as late as this in Armenia." And when he said good-night, he added to Timothy, " Madam and I shall be driving about a good bit while we are here, and we'll keep our eyes open for this Mr. Thissell. I shall know him if I see him, and if we find him anywhere, we will make him come back with us, and we won't let him go again without settling this matter. You see, we may

have to go away again, and this new school would be the very place for our Francis."

Mrs. Lane, walking home under the stars, with her arm about Francis, said, as Father and Mother had said, "Oh, aren't the people in Todd's Ferry kind and good? See what they have done for our boy!"

The boys and girls kept faithful watch on the lookout, but the days went by with no sign of Mr. Thissell. Mr. and Mrs. Lane, driving about the country with Mr. Johnston and Miss Margaret, inquired everywhere, but no one had seen him.

"Cheer up," said Amos, "perhaps we shall find him at the County Fair!"

"County Fair?" echoed Mr. Lane. "Do you mean to say we are lucky enough to be here at County Fair time?"

"Gee," cried Timothy, "I've been so busy I forgot all about the Fair," and he capered about with sheer pleasure.

Belle had not forgotten. She planned to enter some of her preserves, and Isabelle, who had been learning to cook from Grandmother, said noth-

ing to anyone, but arranged to enter some of her home-made bread.

County Fair was held at Prattville, everyone planned to go, and Amos said if they didn't find Adoniram there, he, for one, would be about ready to give up.

"Oh, I'm sure we shall find him there," said Mrs. Lane. "From all you say, I don't see how anyone could miss a County Fair. And then we will all be so nice to him, he will surely agree to sell his land to the school, even if he doesn't feel he can afford to give it. We could raise the money to buy it from him."

Donald was quite impressed with Mr. Lane, who had been so far away and seen so many strange countries. Then, too, Mr. Lane could ride better than any of the soldiers Donald had seen at Fort Myer, and was teaching Donald. They rode together, and Donald tried to persuade Mr. Lane to enter for some of the races at the County Fair, but he would not agree. Donald himself was going to try for one of the silver cups, and was practising every day. He got up early in the morning and rode alone, and if any-

one had been near the lookout at those times, he might have seen Donald stop frequently, tie his horse, and crawl into a certain hole under a great boulder. If that person's ears had been keen, he might have heard a faint rattling and clanking like the noise made when a chain is moved very cautiously and softly. But there was no one near the lookout, and Donald never said anything about these stops at the boulder. When he himself was at the lookout, he never mentioned the mysterious animal whose lair he had discovered. The girls had forgotten all about it. A fox's hole was nothing uncommon to them.

One day Mr. Sims appeared in the yellow automobile. Trudy met him on the village road.

"Oh, dear," she said, as he stopped for her to get in, "are you going to take Claire and Isabelle away? We are having such a lovely time, this vacation. I did hope they wouldn't have to go to work till after the County Fair. You know we are going to have a County Fair over at Prattville next week. Can't they stay for that?"

Mr. Sims laughed.

"Well, this is a nice way to greet a poor overworked man when he comes up for a little vacation of his own! Of course they're going to stay for the Fair! They wrote me about it, and I've come up to go too!"

CHAPTER XII

FIND THE CLOCK-MAN

"THIS makes me think of the story of Judith and Muster Day," said Trudy to Miss Margaret, as they drove to Prattville on their way to the cattle show. "All the people starting early in the morning, and going to see the sights—only they didn't go in a yellow automobile."

"There weren't any automobiles then," said Timothy, "and there were soldiers drilling and riding on fiery horses—say, Uncle Sam, you wait till you see the races this afternoon. Those horses can run, I tell you!"

"I hope there won't be any tornado to-day." Belle was looking at the sky.

Mr. Sims turned out to pass a truck full of young folks. "Needn't worry about any tornado," he said. "It looks to me as if everybody was going to have one splendid time."

When they reached the fair grounds it seemed as if Mr. Sims's words had come true. Such a

crowd! And everybody laughing and interested, walking up and down, staring at the barkers along the Midway who shouted of the wonders that could be seen "for only the small sum of a dime,"—pushing among the crowd gathered about the boys who were trying to ring the bell at the top of a high pole by striking a block with a hammer; stretching their necks to see the man doing high dives; and beyond the Midway, the exhibition tents.

They parked the yellow automobile where Grandfather had unhitched Jack-horse and tied him at the back of the wagon under a tree; Amos was waiting for them, and they started off to see the sights.

"Where is Mr. Johnston?" said Amos.

"He had to wait for the noon mail. He is expecting an important letter about the school," replied Miss Margaret. "He said not to bother about him. He would find us when he came."

"Where shall we go first?"

"I want to see the cows and pigs," cried Timothy.

"To the housekeeping department," said

Trudy, putting her arm about Belle. "We want to see if Belle's preserves took first prize."

"Yes, let's go there," added Isabelle. "I want to look for something."

"Suppose each goes where he wants to," suggested Father, "and we all meet here at twelve o'clock for dinner."

"Well, now, wait a minute!" Timothy said emphatically. "I've got an idea. I think we'd better all keep our eyes open for Mr. Thissell. Amos thinks he may be here, and we can ask him about the land again, if we find him. We could invite him to dinner with us, and ——"

"Good idea!" said Amos, "and when he is full of our good dinner, he will be so pleased he can't help agreeing to give his land!"

They all laughed, but Timothy was in earnest. "He might be here," he said to Trudy and Francis. "We'll keep a sharp lookout."

Timothy and Francis went to the cattle tent. There were two lines of people wandering slowly in opposite directions between the pens where stood the cows, calves, sheep and pigs. Some of the cows were contentedly chewing their cuds,

while others tossed their heads nervously, excited and afraid of so many strange people. There was a great crowd in front of one pen, and the boys pushed their way through. The boards were just high enough so they could not see over the top, and Timothy's foot went out to find a crack to climb by—just as he sprang up from the outside of the pen, something else leaped up from the inside, and a gray, hairy face, topped with two curving horns and ending in a scraggly beard almost touched his own.

"Baa-aaa-aa!" said the goat, and Timothy fell backward, while the crowd roared with laughter. But Timothy was up again and scrambling to the top of the pen, but the goat had gone to the other side and was indifferently eating its dinner. Timothy, looking across, spied a man with white hair and beard, and a hat exactly like that of Mr. Thissell. He could not see his face, but he must find that man, and see if he was Mr. Thissell. Down scrambled Timothy again, ducking through the crowd while men and women scolded at him for pushing, and stepping on their feet. To get to the other side of the

pen, he had to go the length of the tent, and outside. When he got there, the man was gone, and Timothy wandered on again, alone, for Francis had lost him in the jam.

He found Donald at the horse tent.

"Have you seen Mr. Thissell?" said Timothy. "I think I've found him, but I'm not sure. A man told me he came over here."

"No—but come and see this beauty horse that has taken every first prize where she has been exhibited. And her jockey isn't much older than I am. Come on—he lets me go in her stall. Oh, say, but she's a beauty. He's going to race her this afternoon."

The excitement of being allowed to go into the stall of a real prize-winner and chum with her jockey drove Mr. Thissell from Timothy's mind. The boys stayed talking with the jockey till dinner time.

The girls had examined the cooking and the fancy-work. Belle's preserves had taken two prizes, one first and one second, and Isabelle's bread had been awarded an honorable mention. There was to be an aeroplane ascent and para-

chute jump at two o'clock, and altogether there was a great deal to tell when the party met for dinner.

The food was all unpacked, and Mother was counting noses, when—

"Where is my Santa Claus man?" cried Trudy. "We can't eat dinner without him."

"And Stanley and Abbott—they were coming with him!"

"Yes, they told us to wait for them before we went into the forestry exhibit."

Father looked at his watch.

"Time they were here."

Amos was gazing down the Todd's Ferry road. "That looks like McAdam's outfit."

It was the stage, with a party from Todd House. On the front seat with Mr. McAdam were Mr. Johnston, Stanley and Abbott. They did not wave their hands, and when the stage stopped, they climbed slowly down and came soberly toward the group that was awaiting them.

"What is the matter?" said Miss Margaret. "You all look so solemn."

"We have had a letter from Washington," replied Mr. Johnston, "and it is most important that we find Adoniram Thissell at once."

"I've found him!" shouted Timothy. "At least, I guess I've found him, although I haven't talked to him. But I saw him at the goat-pen, and the man in the bee exhibit said he had been there—anyway, a man who looked like him was there. He went over to the horse tent, and I was going to speak to him, but there was a jockey there who let us go in his stall, and I didn't see Mr. Thissell. As soon as we eat dinner, I'll get him for you. You needn't worry any more about that. Come on, now, we've got an awful good lunch, and there's going to be a parachute jump at two o'clock, and I'm terribly hungry. Let's begin."

Stanley and Abbott were very quiet all through lunch and disappeared as soon as they were through, quite forgetting about their promise to take the children through the forestry exhibit. But there was hardly time anyway, with the aeroplane ascent at two o'clock, and the races beginning at three. Timothy did not try to keep

with any of his people, but started off at once to hunt for Mr. Thissell. It was pretty hard to see sometimes, especially in a crowd, but he was not discouraged. At last he saw him—away across the race-track! He saw the white hair, and the long white whiskers, and the broad-brimmed hat! Away went Timothy around the long track. All out of breath, he came up behind the man and touched him on the elbow.

"Oh, Mr. Thissell, if you please, Mr. Johnston wants ——"

The man turned.

He was a total stranger! Timothy had never seen him before and was so surprised that he stood staring.

"Guess you've made a mistake, little boy," said the man pleasantly, but Timothy never even heard him. He was hurrying away as fast as he could to hide. After all he had said—after the way he had bragged about finding Mr. Thissell, it wasn't Mr. Thissell at all! Timothy was sure now that Mr. Thissell had not come to the cattle show. There wasn't a foot of the place that he had not hunted over, and this was the only man

on the whole grounds who looked at all like the clock-man.

Late that afternoon, after the races were over, they all strolled back to the meeting-place, tired and dusty. They were ready to go home.

"But where is Timothy?" said Mother. "We must find him."

From the deep back seat of the yellow automobile came a low, slow voice, oh, so discouraged, not a bit like Timothy's. "I'm here," it said. "I got tired, so I took a nap. Say, that man I saw wasn't the clock-man. He was somebody else."

"Never mind," said Miss Margaret, "it won't make any difference. We shall surely find him soon."

Mr. Johnston and Stanley looked at Abbott. He shook his head. "Not now," he said. "Wait till we get home."

The ride home was quiet. Nobody said very much, not even Mr. Sims. The automobile stopped at the farmhouse, and at Mr. Johnston's request, waited for the others. When they were all there, he said, "Before we separate, I have

something to say. I don't want to say it, but I must. I am sorry to tell you I have had bad news about the school, yes, very bad news."

Abbott sighed.

"The letter I waited for was from Donald's father. He has been looking out for things in Washington for me, and he writes me that there is another site for the school much farther west. I knew that, but I knew too, that it would cost a lot of money to buy that western land, and I hoped that if we all gave the land here in Todd's Ferry, we should be able to have the school here. Now it seems that the Government is in a hurry to begin, and the owners of the western land are working hard to have the school there. If we cannot tell them surely that this land is theirs within a week, the Committee will decide to buy the western site, and Todd's Ferry will lose her School of Forestry."

He winked very fast, and looked up at the sky —anywhere, everywhere, except at the faces about him. But he could not help hearing the sighs, the long breaths, and he waited for the exclamations.

At last—"We mustn't allow that!" said Grandfather. "Something must be done!"

"Nothing at all can be done without Adoniram Thissell," said Amos quietly.

"Oh, Timothy, I wish you had found him at the cattle show!" sobbed Trudy.

But Timothy was not there. He was where Grandmother found him, after the rest had gone, in the secret passage, over the shed-attic; huddled on the floor, in the darkness, Timothy cried his heart out.

CHAPTER XIII

FIND TIMOTHY

"WHEN I told that boy he could play all the rest of the summer, I didn't mean that he was to spend all his time in bed," said Grandfather, coming into the kitchen next morning. "Here it is nine o'clock, and he isn't down yet."

"Never mind, Jonas," said Grandmother softly. "He was crying in his room last night. He feels terribly over this school matter. If he can sleep now, I'm going to let him."

It was ten o'clock when Trudy came from the little red house. She was very still, and sat in the big rocking-chair several minutes before she spoke.

"It's a lovely morning," said Grandmother. "I'm frying apple turnovers for Timothy. Don't you want one?"

"I don't feel hungry. Where is Timothy?"

"He's still abed. I really must call him."

She went to the foot of the stairs and called,

"Timothy—Timothy—come, dear, it's time to get up."

There was no answer.

"Mercy, I hope the child isn't sick," she said, going up-stairs. In a moment, she came down again, puzzled. "He is up," she told Trudy. "But he hasn't been in for any breakfast, and I haven't seen him. He must have gone out very early. I wonder where he can be?"

"Perhaps he's up to the big house. I'll telephone."

But Timothy had not been at the Johnstons —he had not been at the store, or down to Belle's house.

"Run out to the barn, Trudy," said Grandmother anxiously, "and tell Grandfather I can't find Timothy."

Grandfather refused to be excited. "He'll come back all right," he assured them. "Probably he went over to see Abbott and talk things over with him. He may have some scheme in his head for straightening out this school tangle. It would be just like him. Don't worry, he can take care of himself."

Grandmother went to the pantry to put away the apple turnovers. "Mercy!" she cried, "where is my bread?" She looked in the doughnut jar. "And the doughnuts—Jonas, did you eat up all those doughnuts I made yesterday?"

"I certainly did not."

"Well, they are all gone." She hurried back to the kitchen. "My frying-pan is gone too. It's that boy! He has started out somewhere, and he's taken food enough for an army!"

Grandfather laughed. "I guess if he stopped to pack up some grub he won't come to much harm."

"But, Jonas, we don't know where he has gone. He never went away before without telling us. I don't like it."

"Oh, probably he went up to the shack to stay," said Trudy. "I'll run home and tell the girls and we'll go right up there. We'll find him, Grandmother."

"Ask Donald and Francis to go over to Theresy's and see if he has been there," said Grandmother, still uneasy.

They found commotion there too. In the

night, someone had been into the barn and taken Carmencita. Abbott and Stanley stood staring at her empty stall.

"Can't see who could steal that creature," Stanley was saying as the boys came in. "She makes enough noise to wake up everybody in Todd's Ferry if any stranger goes near her."

"It was Timothy," cried Donald.

Abbott turned swiftly—"Timothy? what do you mean?"

"Why, Timothy has run away. He didn't come down to breakfast, and they thought he was asleep, but when Mrs. Todd went up to call him, he wasn't there, and her doughnuts and all her bread, and her fry-pan were gone too, and now Carmencita's gone! I'll bet he came and got her."

Abbott looked at Stanley.

"You told him the other day he could take her whenever he wanted to," Stanley said.

"That part of it is all right, but the question is, where has he gone?"

"The girls have gone up to the shack to see if he is there."

Aunt Theresy came out now, and heard the news. Of course she knew all about the school plan and the trouble that was threatening. And she knew Timothy Todd. She remembered what he and the rest of the "We Four—Lots More" had done when trouble had threatened her. "The child has gone after Adoniram," she said at once, "but which way he went, no one knows."

"Can't anything happen to him right around here," said Abbott. "He has learned enough to forage for himself, and he can't take cold sleeping out-of-doors when it is as warm as it is now. Did he take any blankets?"

"I don't know."

"You don't think he will stay out all night, do you?" said Donald.

Aunt Theresy spoke. "He'll stay till he finds Adoniram Thissell! I know Timothy, and I knew his father before him, and Jonas before that. If a Todd sets his heart on anything, he will get it. I should advise some of you men to start out after him, or at least make some inquiries round about somewhere."

"We ought to have Amos here," muttered Abbott.

"Well, you have," came a voice behind them. "What's up? Any time you want Amos Bean, that's the time he appears. What's the matter? You all look as if you had lost your best friend."

"It's Timothy that is lost."

"Well," said Amos, after he had heard the whole story, "when I woke up this morning I felt something in my bones. First I thought it was rheumatism, but then I saw the sun was shining, and you can't have rheumatism on a sunny day, so I knew it must be trouble. And this is it! Let's go up to the shack. I'm inclined to think Theresy is right, and Timothy has gone after the clock-man. He's probably been to the shack, though. He would want some of the supplies he keeps there. I shouldn't wonder if we found some trace of him." He looked at Abbott and Stanley. "With two professional woodsmen in the crowd, it ought not to be so very hard to track a tenderfoot like Timothy."

Soon there was turmoil all over Todd's Ferry.

Timothy had been at the shack; the girls had found all the canned goods gone, and the best blankets missing, but there was no note or word of explanation. Telephones rang from house to house as folks asked each other, "Have you seen Timothy Todd?"

But every answer was "No." No one had seen him, and at last Mr. Johnston said, "He must have struck out through the woods. Get busy, now, you forest rangers. Timothy must be found."

Donald had ridden swiftly up to the shack as soon as he really knew that Timothy was gone. The girls were there, so he could not do what he wanted to, but as soon as they had gone back to the house, he had hurried up the hill again and had crawled into the "beast's lair" as Timothy had named the deep hole under the boulder. Donald had a dreadful fear that Timothy might be there, but he had not dared to say a word. There was something under that boulder that only Donald knew anything about—a thing that Mr. Johnston and Amos would have smashed if they ever found it. Now Donald lit his flash-light and

crawled trembling into the deep, dark hole. "Timothy," he whispered, "Timothy, are you here?" But all was still, and there was only the thing itself, with its ugly steel jaws still yawning for any little animal that might creep into the cave for shelter. It looked so different to Donald now that he dragged it out angrily, broke it to pieces on the boulder, and threw the pieces deep into the underbrush. Then he leaped onto his horse and galloped away through the woods toward Prattville.

Stanley had at last found a trail that looked as if Carmencita had made it; he and Amos and Abbott followed it through prickly berry-bushes, into swamps and over ridges until they came to the brook that ran into the lake. There they lost it, but, following up-stream, they spied a bit of paper from a cake of sweet chocolate caught in an eddy by the bank.

"He's been here," called Amos who saw it first. "He's eating chocolate as he goes along. He's feeling better if he is hungry."

"Taken to the water," growled Abbott. "And he doesn't know anything about riding

with a pack. We shall soon find him now, for he'll probably lose all his supplies."

Mr. McAdam had sent Bill toward the railroad; Mr. Turner was driving along unfrequented roads, looking for fresh tracks; the girls, by Amos's orders, had gone back to the shack and were watching from the lookout. Grandmother, Mother and Miss Margaret waited at home, worried and anxious. And while they were all wondering and trying to find the missing Timothy, he was driving Carmencita deeper and deeper into the woods. He would not admit to himself that he was lost, but as he rode along he studied the little book in which he had written down the things Abbott had said about woodcraft.

"I b'lieve that Mr. Thissell went up toward the White Mountains," he said to himself, "for I heard him tell Grandfather that trade was better up near the big hotels, and that's northeast from here. So all I have to do is to keep going northeast, and when I strike a hotel, ask 'em if he's there. We can take the train back, and save time —this old burro-critter is the slowest thing I ever

saw—get up, there, you Carmencita, I'm in a hurry!"

Carmencita turned her head. She did not need to look at the moss on the tree trunks to see where north was—she did not need to squint at the sun to find the west—she knew, by the instinct God has given the animals, where home was, and food, and shelter. So she only pulled at the rein stubbornly, and turned her head in the direction which she chose. The sun was high. Timothy knew that it was noon-time. "Oh, I don't care," he said, "go that way as well as any. I don't know where north is, with the sun right overhead. I'm hungry." He munched at a doughnut as Carmencita ambled through strange and unfamiliar woods.

Abbott and his party followed the stream until they heard voices. They broke into a run, and found a camp-fire blazing merrily on the banks of the brook, with a dozen or more boarders from Todd House sitting about it, laughing and talking, and waiting for the kettle to boil. But Timothy was not there.

"Hello, Mr. Bean," they called. "Come on

over and have lunch with us. Bring your friends. We're having a picnic."

"So I see," replied Amos, "but we're not! We're out after a missing boy. Have you seen Timothy Todd, from the hill, go by on a burro since you have been here?"

"Why, no, there hasn't been anyone here at all until you came."

"We found his tracks—a piece of sweet chocolate wrapper—a ways back in the brook, so we thought you might have seen him."

"Oh," cried one of the girls, "that was a piece I threw away. I was watching it sail down the current."

Abbot looked at Stanley. "Guess we'll have to try another trail," he said, while Amos explained to the boarders.

Stanley and Abbott were already hurrying back toward the village. The men in the picnic party got to their feet. "You eat your lunch, and go home when you get ready," they said to the women and children. "We must help find that boy. Be sure you put out the fire."

CHAPTER XIV

"FIRE! FIRE!"

"WE ought to help, too," said one of the women. "Let's start off up the hill now. We can eat as we go along."

They threw water on the fire, and scattered the ashes about with a long stick. They hurried so fast that no one noticed a mass of hot coals that fell into a dry hollow full of dead leaves. They were climbing the hill toward the shack before the little wisps of blue smoke curled up in the still air; no one was left to see the flames that ran about in the pine needles, and licked the dry berry-bushes. And then the wind, that had been still so long, decided to blow a bit; it found the little flames and chased them this way and that, and the faster they ran, the harder blew the wind.

Trudy was in the lookout at the shack. She had an idea that if she watched Mr. Thissell's house long enough, she must see him coming out

the door. It did not seem possible that he could stay away when the whole success of the new school depended upon his coming back! Belle, Claire and Isabelle were wandering about, looking for traces of Carmencita and Timothy. At the farmhouse, Grandmother was trying to do her work, but she spent more time at the door, looking down the road, than in the kitchen. Grandfather kept saying, "Now, Mother, don't worry. That boy will be all right." Then he would have an errand out to the barn, and would make long stops in the road, shading his eyes with his hand and looking all about. But the road and the hillsides were all still and motionless. There was no Carmencita, trotting home with a boy on her back.

Mr. Sims had been down to the location, to see that the picture was going on all right. He drove up to the store on his way back, just in time to hear Mr. McAdam telephoning the farmhouse to see if Timothy had been found.

"What's that?" said Mr. Sims, quickly, and when he heard the story, he rushed up to the big house as fast as the golden car could speed.

Trudy, in her lookout, was getting discouraged. She had stared so long without seeing anything but grass and trees, and Mr. Thissell's house, all quiet except for the bees flying in and out the little holes under the eaves! She watched them, wondering how it looked under the roof, where they had their hives—suddenly she saw something moving, swaying, behind the house, away down the hill beyond the pine grove. It drifted up from the underbrush! She caught her breath. She seized the glasses—yes, there was a little blue streamer of smoke where no smoke ought to be! As she looked, another swept up at one side—they grew larger ——

"FIRE! FIRE! Oh, girls, quick! A woods fire below Mr. Thissell's house!"

The girls raced back to the shack. Trudy was scrambling down the ladder.

"Get out the brooms," she directed, "all you can carry—and pails, and the pitchfork. I know where Mr. Thissell's well is, and we can get water there. We can wet the brooms there, and fill the pails."

"Oh, dear, isn't it awful!" wailed Isabelle.

"And the woods so dry. Everything will burn up!"

"We must get help," said Belle. "Oh, if Timothy was only here. He knows how to signal the fire warden. Oh, if we only had a telephone in the shack. I'll run as fast as I can to the big house, and call folks from there."

Claire, loaded with brooms and a great pail, was already staggering down the hill. Suddenly there came the sound of a horse's neigh, and Donald rode up the path.

"Fire, Donald, — fire," screamed Trudy, "down behind the clock-man's house. Go for help!"

Donald wheeled his horse and galloped toward home, as the girls hurried down the hill. They had no thought of waiting. They knew what to do to save their beloved trees, and their one idea was to reach the danger-spot and do what they could till help came. They did not dream that someone miles away was summoning help faster even than Donald could gallop.

High on the mountain, the fire warden was sweeping the country with his powerful glasses.

"Fire! Fire! Oh, Girls, Quick!"

He, too, saw the wicked little blue streamers. He measured a moment on his map, then took down his telephone. Instantly the bells in the houses of Todd's Ferry began to ring—" Hello, this is the fire warden. Forest fire starting in the region between the Primeval Pines and Adoniram Thissell's house. Traveling up the hill. Get there at once!" And then, to the astonishment of some of the people he added, " Go to Timothy Todd's shack for apparatus, if necessary. He is well supplied."

Mr. Johnston got the message as Mr. Sims swept into the yard. Down the hill again sped the yellow automobile, stopping to pick up men on their way to the fire. Mr. McAdam drove his delivery truck—and Bill raced over to Mr. Perkins's barn for horses and wagon. They loaded spades and pickaxes into the machines. They hurried toward the hillside where now the smoke was growing ever thicker and thicker. Grandfather harnessed Jack-horse and Grandmother climbed into the wagon without even taking off her kitchen apron. But she stopped long enough to pack a basket with oil and bandages and

soda. "Someone may get burned, Father," she said.

The girls ran past Mr. Thissell's house, and a little way below, met the women and children of the picnic party walking briskly along.

"What's the matter?" they cried, as the girls raced on. "Is anyone chasing you?"

"Fire!" gasped Isabelle, pointing. "Look!"

They looked—at the smoke, now mounting high in the sky—and then at each other.

"Oh, how terrible! Do you suppose it could have been our camp-fire? We were right over there!"

"Well, you ought to know better than to leave a camp-fire," scolded Trudy; "if you did it, after all the signs we have put up. But come along back now, and help put it out. We'll show you how."

They stopped at the well to wet the brooms and fill the pails. Soon they could hear the little flames crackling in the bushes, and feel the gusts of hot air when the wind blew toward them. "Look out for your clothes," said Trudy. "We mustn't go too near. I don't know that we can

do so very much until some men come to dig a trench, but we can beat out the little flamés on the edges."

"Give me that fork," said a woman. "I can dig as well as a man."

When the yellow automobile flew up the road and the men tumbled out, they found a little band of women and children spread out in a semi-circle in front of the fire, beating at treacherous little spurts of flame in the dry grass, trying to dig in the hard ground that was so full of roots, and throwing sand from the road on the fire that ran so fast. The bushes below were blazing, and some of the dry pines were on fire in their lower branches. Abbott and Stanley came on the second load, with Amos, and some of the village boys.

"That grove is gone," said Abbott. "The pines are all burning, but we'll try to save the rest of the trees."

Under his directions, the men and boys formed a line, and began to dig furiously, making a wide trench in the path of the oncoming fire. The little grove was fortunately separated from the

other trees by an open space, with only a very few tall trees. Abbott's plan was to try to keep the fire in the low bushes where it could be fought more easily.

The trench grew. The women and children formed a line to the well, passing buckets of water down to the men, some of whom were beating out the fire in the grass and low bushes. The smoke was dying down. In the excitement, Timothy was forgotten, and everyone started when a voice came down the hill—"Say, come on up here, somebody! The fire has come around behind the house."

There, by Mr. Thissell's back door, was Timothy on Carmencita. He shouted and called, as he slid off her back. But instead of coming down to help, he ran swiftly back to the shack. Men hurried up the hill. The woods behind Mr. Thissell's house were blazing. The fire was racing through the underbrush that grew all the way to the back door.

"Leave that lower fire to the women," shouted Abbott. "You men get up here, and get here quick!"

"Amos," yelled Timothy. "Say, Amos, come and help me, will you?" Amos ran up to the shack. Timothy was struggling to free the ladder from the lookout.

"The bees!" he panted. "The bees—we must save Mr. Thissell's bees if the house is going to burn. He cares more for his bees than for any living person—he told me so."

Amos cut the ladder loose, and they carried it down to the house. They set it up against the front porch. "Hold on, Timothy," said Amos, "that's no good. You can't get in though the bee-holes. And there's no window in that attic. We must get in through the door."

"It's locked—and the back door is fastened with a Dutch lock. I know all about the house. Here ——"

"The roof is on fire!" shouted someone.

There was a call for water, and men seized the ladder, and climbed onto the porch roof. It was too short to reach the main roof, so they pulled it up and climbed again, then lowered it, that others might stand on it and pass buckets of water up to them.

No one noticed when Timothy picked up a rock—no one heard the crash of glass when he smashed the kitchen window—no one missed him when he climbed inside—and, of course, no one could see him running up the stairs and hunting for the attic door. He found it after several trials, and clattered up the steep, dark stairs. The attic was very dark, very hot and very stuffy. He could hear the men on the roof just over him; the water dripped down through the loose, dry shingles; light began to come in, flickering red light that was worse than the darkness. Holes appeared in the roof, wicked little black smoky holes. Now Timothy could see the beehives—square boxes full of frightened, angry bees. He must get those beehives down-stairs and out of doors, and he knew nothing about handling bees. And those bees were thoroughly excited and indignant—there were strange and most unpleasant goings-on in their quiet home, and they did not know what to make of it. But they were going to defend their home. When Timothy appeared, they must have thought he was the cause of all the trouble, for they flew at

him, and they stung wherever they could. He beat them off—and he lifted one of the hives—at least, he was trying to when a strong hand on his shoulder stopped him.

"Go down-stairs, boy," said Mr. Thissell's queer, flat voice. "I reckon these bees will know me better than they do you. I'll 'tend to 'em."

Timothy stumbled down the stairs, and out the now open door into the air, but he could not see. His eyes were puffed up, face, hands and arms were burning as if the fire had caught him, but he did not care. Mr. Thissell had come back, and they would have the school in Todd's Ferry! For Mr. Thissell should never again leave Todd's Ferry until he had consented to sell his land—Timothy would see to that, bee-stings or no bee-stings!

Grandmother saw him as he stumbled out the door. "Oh, you poor child," she cried. "Margaret, look at Timothy!"

Miss Margaret did not hear her. She had been watching the fire, and now she saw something—Abbott saw it too, and drew a long

breath. The fire was going in the opposite direction! The wind had changed just in time, and was blowing the fire back over the burned land. It was dying out. Mr. Thissell, coming out with a hive of bees, strangely quiet now, and not offering to sting anyone, saw it.

"Guess the worst is over," he said. "Much obliged to all you folks for taking so much trouble to save my house. Where's the boy that went in after the bees?"

"Went after the bees?" exclaimed Grandmother. "Is that what ails you, Timothy?"

Timothy mumbled. His lips were swelling fast. Mr. Thissell came up with a handful of mud. "I'll fix him," he said; "nothing like mud to take the smart out of bee-stings. You'll feel all right pretty soon, boy. And don't be scared —bee-stings is a sure cure for rheumatism."

"Timothy hasn't any rheumatism," said Trudy, half-crying, "and he is terribly stung."

Almost as if he had heard her, Mr. Thissell went on: "Probably you never will have any rheumatism, having all these stings while you're young. What made you go after the bees, boy?"

Trudy answered for him. "He said you thought more of the bees than you did of human beings," she screamed, "and he was trying to save their lives."

"And if he hadn't had implements to fight the fire at his shack, the whole woods would have gone, and your house and all your place, Adoniram," shouted Grandfather.

"Yes," added Amos, "and if the girls hadn't known what to do with the things he had ready, they couldn't have held the fire till help came. All this that they learned is what you call nonsense. It seems to me that their nonsense came in pretty handy for you, Adoniram."

Mr. Thissell looked around. He saw the holes in his roof—he saw the black woods behind his house, still smouldering here and there—he looked at the people—friends, neighbors, strangers; men, women and children—who had come swiftly when need arose, but who would have been helpless before a mighty fire if some boys and girls had not learned just what to do in an emergency. He looked up at the little shelves under the eaves, where now the bees, slowly get-

ting over their fright, were beginning to crawl again. He rubbed his hands together.

"I surely am greatly obliged to you all," said the clock-man. "But how did you come to discover the fire?"

Grandfather spoke. "The children were watching for you, Adoniram, so they were keeping a pretty sharp eye on your house. They want to see you for something particular. You know what it is. You come down to the house with me, and talk it over."

CHAPTER XV

GONE AGAIN

"But what made you go off in the night, Timothy, without telling anyone?"

Grandmother was speaking. They were in the farmhouse living-room, and Timothy's stings had been bathed and wet with ammonia. All of the Todds and Johnstons had come home with Grandfather and Grandmother to hear Timothy's story.

"Well, I wanted to find Mr. Thissell, and I couldn't wait. I thought perhaps, if I went on Carmencita, and tried to do all Abbott had told me, I might come across his trail somewhere in the woods. I knew the rest of you would try telephoning to all the villages. But the sun went in, and I couldn't tell the points of the compass; and the woods got deeper and deeper, and I didn't dare stop to light a fire, and, anyway, Carmencita wouldn't mind me very well—she just wanted to keep on going, and by and by,

the first I knew I was back where I started, and saw all you folks."

"And plenty of fire, too, didn't you?" grinned 'Amos. "But where did you come across Adoniram? Lucky you found him—I was glad to have him come along and see that other folks do know something, after all. It will be a good thing for him to remember that your 'silly nonsense' saved his house. Where did you say you met him?"

"I didn't meet him. I never saw him at all till he came up in the attic behind me!"

But all that was explained when the clock-man came. He had decided to stay at the farmhouse for a few days, he told them. And he explained that he had just happened to come back to his house to get some instruments and materials that he needed in his work. He had been, as they thought, over into New York State, and was soon going back for an autumn trip through the mountains. He had broken some of his tools, so came back for more. At least, that was what he said.

Abbott and Stanley, with Francis and Donald,

stayed near the fire until all danger was past. Abbott said, when he heard that it was all caused by the campers, that he would go over to Todd House and read them a lecture; but Donald said he reckoned that wouldn't be necessary—their own men-folks seemed to be doing that on the way home. At the village, everyone was talking about the fire, and how lucky it was that Timothy had stored apparatus at his shack—how very fortunate that the girls had been in the look-out—and then the story spread about the Government School! Soon all of Todd's Ferry knew that all the land was promised except the very middle section where the building would stand, and that Mr. Thissell, the owner of this land, was not in favor of the plan. And, worst of all, that unless he agreed, there would be no school in Todd's Ferry!

"I should think now he might change his mind," said Mr. Perkins, while Mr. McAdam was sorting the mail, "but Adoniram is so set. If he has said he will never give a foot of land for the school, you might just as well make up your mind he never will."

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to get up a petition?" suggested one of the campers. "I feel as if we were responsible for a good deal of damage around here, and we ought to do something to make up for it. If we all signed, and promised to contribute some money toward the school, wouldn't he be more likely to consent?"

"No," said Mr. Perkins emphatically, "that would be the worst thing you could do. The more that folks want Adoniram to do a thing, the less he wants to do it."

The clock-man was acting in a very mysterious manner. He seemed perfectly willing to follow Grandfather all over the farm, and they apparently talked a good deal, but whenever anyone came near them, Mr. Thissell became as dumb as a clam, and so deaf he could not hear a word. So how could he hear Timothy telling about all the benefits of a Government School of Forestry, when, no matter how loud he shouted, all Mr. Thissell would do was to crook his hand behind his ear, and say, "Hey?—What are you mumbling about?" It made Timothy so cross that he failed utterly to notice the twinkle in Grand-

father's eye, and he paid no attention to the strange fact that all the grown-ups had stopped worrying about the school. They hardly mentioned it. But Timothy tagged Mr. Thissell all over the place for two days; then he tried another plan. He got all his Government leaflets and put them wherever Mr. Thissell would be likely to sit down. They were beside his plate at mealtimes; they were in his room; they were on the table, by the reading-lamp; they were even in the barn. But Timothy never saw him reading them.

Two days after the fire, Mother came over to the farmhouse.

"I have come to invite you all over to the little red house to-morrow," she said. "We are going to have a party."

"Party?" said Timothy. "What for? I don't want to go to any party till this thing is settled. I'm worried, I tell you."

"Oh, Timothy, I do hope you will come! You see to-morrow is your birthday, and it is your party."

Timothy stared. Then he went to look at the

calendar. Sure enough, to-morrow was September twenty-fifth, and that was his birthday!

"It is the day you have looked forward to, Timothy," said Grandmother. "But all this excitement has made you forget. It's the first birthday in your teens. Don't you know you are thirteen years old to-morrow?"

"And isn't it lovely that Claire and Isabelle are here? Mr. Sims is going to stay, too, and take them down to the North Shore next day."

"I want to ask Mr. Thissell to the party," added Mother. "Where is he?"

"He and Jonas went to Prattville on business," was Grandmother's surprising answer. "I'll tell him when he comes back."

"I don't believe I want that old clock-man at my party," said Timothy slowly. "I'm about sick of the way he is acting. I know if we don't settle this land business pretty quick, there won't be any school in Todd's Ferry."

Mother smiled. "I'd let him come, if I were you, Timothy," she said. "Sometimes a party makes people good-natured."

"Well, all right, I don't care. Only I did

think that saving his bees would have some effect on him. Say, what are you going to have to eat at the party? And who's coming?"

That afternoon was the very longest that Timothy Todd ever spent. There seemed to be nothing to do. There seemed to be no one to play with. Everybody was mysteriously busy about something, or had vanished completely. He went over to Aunt Theresy's with a note from Mother, asking her to the party; there was nobody home except Carmencita and the cow.

Timothy stayed in the barn a while, and then left the note on the back steps. He strolled out to The Tablet, and sat under the Primeval Pines, but not even a party of boarders came by. At Mr. Turner's house, he saw the housekeeper asleep in the kitchen; Mr. Turner was away, for the horse was gone from the stall. Timothy had wanted to talk over the matter of the old brooms —Mr. Turner had been the first person to give him any, when he had decided to make the shack a storehouse for fire prevention. Even the store was deserted. Mr. McAdam was alone, and was figuring his accounts—he said it was a hard job,

and told Timothy to run away and not bother him.

Back on the hill, it was about as lonely. The girls were at the little red house, helping Mother and Miss Margaret. They drove him away with shrieks when he appeared in the shed. "Oh, don't let him come in here!—Oh, he mustn't see what I'm doing!"

"Huh!" he muttered. "They think they're doing something wonderful. I don't care! I'll walk down the Prattville road, and meet Grandfather and Mr. Thissell, and get a ride."

He met Grandfather, jogging along with Jack-horse, but Mr. Thissell was not there.

"Where's the clock-man?" demanded Timothy, clambering over the wheel.

"Oh, he had to go away sooner than he expected," replied Grandfather, calmly. "Get up, Jack!"

"Go away! Without doing anything about his land? And you let him? And you drove him over to Prattville? Don't you want the school? Now what are we going to do?—You turn right around, Grandfather Todd, and

we'll go after him. I will not give up that school!"

"Hold your horses!" said Grandfather, pulling the reins away from Timothy's hands. "I don't know where he has gone. He didn't say. All he did say was that he'd like to have you young folks still keep an eye on his house and his bees. He wanted me to say to you that he wished you would take a walk over to his house this afternoon, and see that everything was all right. He seems to have taken quite a liking to you, Timothy."

"Well, he needn't like me, because I think he is a horrid old selfish thing!"

"He asked me how old you were, and I told him you were twelve to-day, but to-morrow you would be thirteen."

At the farmhouse, the children, done with mysteries, were waiting for Timothy.

"We've all come to ask Mr. Thissell to the party," they called.

"Can't ever ask him anything," said Timothy despairingly, "for he has gone away, and that's the end of everything!"

Amidst the tears and exclamations came Grandfather's voice.

"Stop right where you are, children. No more crying. Timothy has not told you the whole story. Mr. Thissell has gone away, but he left a message. He asked Timothy to walk over to his house this afternoon, and see that everything was all right."

"And I'm not going! I don't care what happens to his house, or his old bees either!"

Trudy had seen Grandmother smile! And if Grandmother could smile when all the children were in despair, there must be some reason for it. Trudy's heart leaped—she began to feel excited —something might happen ——

"Yes, you are going, Timothy!" she cried. "You are going this very minute, and we will all go with you!"

"Yes, we will!"

"Come on, now!"

Timothy did not want to go, but the others insisted, and finally dragged him along. Trudy skipped ahead. At the shack, they heard pounding in the direction of Mr. Thissell's house.

"Perhaps he went home!"

"Maybe he has changed his mind!"

They ran down the hill. A man's head bobbed up over the ridgepole. Amos was mending the roof. He climbed up and sat astride the saddle-board.

"What is all this?" he called. "Another rescue party? The roof is all mended. You should have come earlier to help."

"Is Mr. Thissell here?" shouted Timothy.

"Here—on the roof? No, I haven't seen him. He sent word for me to come over and make the roof tight, and that's all I know. Say, Timothy, I hear you are going to have a great celebration to-morrow. I'm coming, and I'm coming early, with all my appetite. Have a good big cake, won't you?"

Timothy paid no attention. He turned to Trudy. "I told you it wasn't any use. He isn't here."

Claire and Isabelle were watching the bees to hide their tears. A bee flew around the corner of the house. They followed idly, to see if he would go to the hives. He alighted on a piece

of goldenrod by the front door, but they no longer looked at him. They had seen the note on the dark green door. They had read the name on it!

"Timothy!—Oh, Timothy, come here! Look at this!"

Timothy came slowly. "Well, what is it now?"

"A note for you! See?—Oh, read it quick—what does it say?"

Trudy dashed up as Timothy snatched the note and tore open the envelope. He read it, scowled, crumpled it into a ball and threw it down in the grass. He walked away.

Trudy picked it up and smoothed it out. The girls, reading over her shoulder, saw this:

"DEAR TIMOTHY TODD:

"I am sending you a present for your birthday—to-morrow.

"Respectfully,

"ADONIRAM THISSELL."

They did not catch up with Timothy until they were almost home. He was sitting under a bush

by the roadside, pretending to watch the ants in a hill.

"What do you suppose it will be, Timothy?" said Trudy. "We read the note."

"I don't know, and I don't care! I don't want his old present, and I won't take it—so there!"

CHAPTER XVI

TIMOTHY'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

THE morning of Timothy's birthday was clear and cool. Mr. Perkins, taking some passengers to the early train, noticed a bit of frost in the low places, but when he came back the sun had melted it all away. On the hill, by the little red house, the goldenrod and asters glowed in the sunshine; here and there in the woods a maple tree flamed scarlet, and by the roadsides the sumach blazed in crimson.

In the dining-room of the little house, Mother and the girls were setting the table for the party. Grandmother had made a birthday cake so big that there would be a generous piece for each one, and Miss Margaret was arranging thirteen candles on it. In the middle she put a little glass vase that, just before the party, would be filled with flowers.

"Let's see," said Mother, "I think Timothy

ought to sit here. Get the evergreen, Trudy, and you and the girls trim his chair."

Francis and Donald had gathered yards of ground pine, and made it into long ropes; now the girls twined them about Timothy's chair until it looked like a soft, green throne. At the top they put a circle of blackberry vine that had turned a lovely red. "That is the king's crown," said Isabelle.

In the farmhouse, though, things were different. Timothy was still cross and disappointed, and too much disturbed about Mr. Thissell's disappearance to realize that Grandmother and Grandfather were quite calm about the whole matter. Grandmother was making sandwiches for the party, and Grandfather was working in the field, exactly as usual. Timothy wandered about uneasily. "Guess I'll go up to the shack," he said.

"That's a good idea, but be home in good season. We are going over to the red house right after dinner, and I don't want you to be late for your party."

Timothy shuffled out the door without a reply.

"Poor little boy," smiled Grandmother to herself. "How differently he will feel before night!" And then she laughed softly, thinking of the surprise in store for him.

At the store, Mr. Johnston and Mr. McAdam were sending a message to somebody in Washington that Timothy had never heard of; yet this unknown man, away off there, was helping to make a happy birthday for him. Amos was riding in the train, keeping his hand on something in his pocket that was part of Timothy's birthday. And Timothy, hunched up in the lookout, stared down at Mr. Thissell's house, with the new yellow patches on the roof where the fire had burned through, and never dreamed what was happening.

About eleven o'clock he began to feel hungry. There was no food in the shack, or he would have made a fire and eaten his dinner alone. He began to think about the party a little. He had caught a glimpse of the birthday cake in the pantry, and Trudy had told him some of the goodies that Mother was planning. "Might as well go to the old party," he said to himself. "Aunt

Helen makes pretty good brownies—and I heard Grandmother say chocolate frosting."

He did not eat much dinner, and Grandfather joked him, asking if he were saving his appetite for the party. In spite of Grandmother's planning, they were a little late, and most of the guests were out under the big pine on the ledge to welcome him. It certainly was a real party. The Johnstons and the Lanes were there from the big house; Mr. Turner and his housekeeper came; the children, of course, were all there, including Dave and Henry. Stanley and Abbott sat at either side of Aunt Theresy, and Carmencita, with Trudy's pink sash tied in a great bow around her neck, grazed in the yard. Stanley's camera was set up, and Mr. Sims was taking a picture. The big yellow automobile stood by the roadside.

"What's the automobile here for?" asked Timothy. "And where's Amos?"

"I gave Aunt Theresy a ride," replied Mr. Sims, ignoring the question about Amos. "Come on, Timothy, hurry up—I want to take your picture."

"What for?"

"To put in the paper, because it is your birthday."

How the grown folks laughed! And the children laughed, too, but not for the same reason. They thought Mr. Sims was joking.

He took ever so many pictures—groups of different people, but not many there knew that he and Stanley had taken pictures of the shack, and of Mr. Thissell's house, and the pine grove that had been destroyed by the fire. Nor did they even suspect that these pictures would later be shown all over the United States to show what boys and girls could do!

Then they played games, and Timothy had a good time in spite of himself. He forgot Mr. Thissell for a little while. In the midst of a frolicking game, Mr. McAdam drove up the road.

"Special delivery letter for Timothy Todd," he called. "Guess the President is sending birthday greetings."

"Oh, what can it be?—Oh, Timothy, open it quick!—Who's it from?"

Timothy tore open the envelope. Everybody stood very still. The grown-ups looked at each other, and their eyes twinkled.

"It's awful funny writing," cried Trudy, peeping at the letter. "What does it say?"

Timothy did not answer. He was reading the letter. He turned to the signature—then he swallowed hard, and scowled.

"I won't," he said. "I—will—not!"

Miss Margaret took the letter. "May I read it, Timothy?" she said gently. "Will you let me read your letter aloud, dear?"

She did not seem a bit surprised as she read it. The grown-ups said never a word, but there were many ohs and ahs from the children. This was the letter:

"Mr. Timothy Todd,

"Honored and respected Sir:

"Wishing to show my appreciation of what you did to save my bees, my house, and other property from fire, a few days ago, I am giving you a present, as I understand this is your birthday. I do not like parties, so I shall not come to yours, although I was invited, and I thank you

for that. It is not convenient for me to send my present, either; I must ask you to take a little trouble to get it. Go to my front door.

"I remain, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"ADONIRAM THISSELL."

"Let's go—oh, let's go and see what it is!"

"I know what it is—it's a hive of bees, and he wouldn't even bring it over. I don't want any of his things. I won't have his old bees! He told me he was going to give me some."

Mr. Sims was in the golden car. "Come on, everybody," he called. "Get in front with me, Timothy. You're the boss to-day, but we are surely going to find your present. Pile in, everybody—hang on anywhere!"

Laughing and shouting, they pushed Timothy into the car, then climbed in until it looked like an omnibus. Mr. McAdam took some in his machine, and they sped away to Mr. Thissell's house.

It was just as quiet and deserted as Timothy had seen it in the morning, but on the green front door had appeared a patch of white paper, ad-

dressed in the same queer handwriting to Timothy Todd. Thoroughly interested now, Timothy jumped out and ran up the path.

"It says, 'Look at the Memorial Boulder by the Primeval Pines.'"

"On to the Pines!" shouted Mr. Sims.

"I wish Amos was here," said Timothy to Trudy. "I didn't think he would miss my birthday."

"Your birthday isn't over yet," laughed Mr. Sims.

On the Boulder was a box, done up in brown paper and tied with a pink string. Timothy was out of the machine before it stopped, and the paper came off that box in a jiffy! The box was full of fresh honey, but no one wanted any now, for under the cover was another note. This time Timothy needed no urging. "Honey is good with hot biscuits," he read aloud, and then:

"Now go to the place where you want your school,
And don't be too hard on a stubborn, old fool!"

"Hurry!—Oh, do hurry!" shouted Timothy. "Go to the place where we want our school!"

"Oh, what does it all mean?" cried Trudy, snuggling up to the Santa Claus man who was smiling all over his happy face. "You know, don't you?" She turned to look at the rest of the older folks. "Timothy, they all know. It is something perfectly lovely!'"

"It is the very loveliest thing that has ever happened in Todd's Ferry," said Miss Margaret.

A wild, unformed idea glimmered in Timothy's head. He could not understand, but his courage came back, and his hopes about the school flew high again. Something certainly was going to happen.

"Can't you make this old car go any faster?" he asked Mr. Sims.

Through the village, and down the grassy road they flew, until they reached the open space where Todd's Ferry had hoped to have the Government School of Forestry. The sun shone on the broad fields, on the forests at either side, on the mountain, straight ahead. Mr. Sims and Mr. McAdam parked the cars. "There isn't anything here," said Belle.

"Over on the ledge," ordered Timothy.

"The note said 'The spot where you hoped to build your school,' and that's the identical spot."

They climbed the wall, and hurried across the field. Sitting on the ledge, back to them, calmly surveying the landscape, was a man.

"It is the clock-man!" cried Francis.

"It's Amos," said Timothy.

Amos turned and waved his hand. As they came nearer, he called, "Well, you're here at last, are you? I'm glad to see you. I generally go to birthday parties when I'm invited, but this time I had my orders to wait right here for the party to come to me. I've had quite a wait."

"Where's Mr. Thissell? What do you know about it?"

"About what?"

"Mr. Thissell's present for me. He sent me a note to go to his house, and I went; and then I went to the Pines, and there was another note, saying to come here, and here I am. Where is he?"

"I don't exactly know where he is, but his present is here, all right. I've been guarding it for an hour or more."

"Give it to me. I want to see it."

"You're standing on it now. We all are. Look around—it's all about us."

Timothy looked down—and up—and about—and then he understood.

"Oh, my gracious!" he said, very quietly. "Amos, don't joke any more. Has Mr. Thissell given his land for the school? Has he, really?"

"No," said Amos, "but he has given it to you! Here is the deed, all recorded. I went to Concord this morning, and had it fixed up. Adoniram never goes back on anything he says, and he said he would never give a foot of land to the school, but after you children showed him a thing or two, he came as near changing his mind as a Thissell can. He talked it all over with Jonas, and Mr. Johnston, and a few more of us, and finally cooked up the scheme to give the piece of land to you. He says you are to do what you like with it."

"What I like? Well, gee, I'll give it to the Government quick as ever I can. Say, come on, now, let's get home and fix it up. We haven't got much time." He turned to Mr.

Johnston as an awful thought came. "It isn't too late, is it?"

Mr. Johnston turned to the road and beckoned. Ben Dobson came across the field on the run. "Telegram!" he called. "Telegram for Mr. Johnston."

"Here's the answer to that, Timothy," said Mr. Johnston, as everyone crowded about to hear what he was saying. "I knew what you would do, so I sent a wire to Washington telling the committee that it was all right. This telegram is their reply. They say, 'Todd's Ferry School of Forestry assured. Congratulations. Thanks of the Government to all who so nobly responded.'"

Timothy drew a long breath.

"Gee!" he said. "This is the best birthday I ever had. I think Mr. Thissell is all right. I guess I'll let him give me some bees, after all."

"By the way," said Amos, "that reminds me. This has been so exciting I nearly forgot it. Mr. Thissell told me to say that when the school was done, if there was a tower on the place, he would contribute a clock for it—and he said he'd put it

in himself, then he would know it was done right!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Thissell!" cried Abbott.

When the noise had died away, Amos spoke. "Isn't there any supper to this birthday party? I had to miss my dinner to get back in time to carry out my part of the surprise. Seems to me I heard some remarks about a birthday cake. I hope it is a big one. I'm ready to eat my share of it."

Mother laughed. "It certainly is time we went back."

Later, Timothy, seated on his evergreen throne, his birthday cake flaming with its thirteen candles in front of him, said thankfully, "I shall never forget this birthday as long as I live, on account of Mr. Thissell's present!"

"But," teased Amos, "you gave his present away almost before you got it."

"Yes," Grandmother answered for him, "and that is the best thing about the whole birthday. Timothy has not only had one himself, but he has given a birthday to the 'Todd's Ferry

School,' and who knows how many other people may remember that birthday as long as they live?"

For a moment they were all silent, for it seemed as if they could see already the great buildings that would rise on the lovely green slopes facing the mountain, and surrounded by the forests that they would protect. It seemed as if the voices of the boys and girls who would come from near and far sounded in their ears, and above the voices they heard, ringing clear from the high tower, the chimes of Mr. Thissell's clock, summoning the students to come to Todd's Ferry School, and learn the wonderful secrets of man's greatest friends, the trees!

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